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The SMART SET

*A Magazine of
Cleverness*



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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF
CLEVERNESS

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A queen's caprice, a courtier's boast, and lo,
The gilded château mushroomed into air —
Rose lightly as a mist the breezes bear —
Rose reckless of the People's piteous woe
And the long hunger that the toilers know —
Rose on the brink of all that ruin of things,
The crash of centuries, the doom of kings,
While flaming rages thundered from below.

Fools! fools! one hour and hell comes battle-red,
With work-worn millions crying out for bread —
Comes with the hoof-beat of The Marseillaise,
The fury of the people spurned and trod,
The surge and clamor of the judgment day —
Poor wild hands feeling blindly after God!

— EDWIN MARKHAM



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COPONSETT-BY-THE-SEA

By Alexander Otis

"MY dear," urged the worried husband, "I can't pull up stakes here now; I've driven them in too firmly." His tone of voice was anything but firm; tremulous persuasiveness vibrated through it on a minor key.

"But I can, Amasa," retorted Elfrida belligerently; "and what is more, I'm going to. I'd rather run a city boarding house or sell tickets for charity dances than stand existence in this desolate hole another winter."

"Isn't it a nice home? I've tried to make it all that a home should be," urged the breadwinner mildly.

"Nice enough perhaps; I'm not complaining of that, Amasa. But no one ever comes to it."

There was a ring at the bell.

"There's someone now, dear."

"Yes, of course; the grocer or the milkman or the butcher, the only diversions Coponsett affords," and she bounced out of the room to attend to the "diversions."

Elfrida Bradshaw had been bred to city life. She had not expected to make her home in a secluded country village when, five years before, she had married the rising young journalist; but Amasa

Bradshaw, cursed with a touch of genius, had developed a distressing proclivity to quarrel with his bread and butter—in the persons of dictatorial city editors—until he was blacklisted by the metropolitan press, and had to start a paper of his own or find some other means of livelihood. After several years of patient effort he had managed to establish a weekly journal at Coponsett, and had bought and paid for their humble *pied-à-terre*. He worked hard and loved his work. He was proud of his home, his wife, his paper, in the inverse order named, and would have been happy had his spouse permitted it.

Elfrida, however, bewailed her fate in every form of rebellion against the decrees of Providence known to her sex. At first she had admired the sturdy way in which her husband had set his hand to the plow—alias the lawn mower; but the winters at Coponsett were dreary in the extreme, and the one just passed she vowed should be her last in that forlorn hamlet.

Amasa Bradshaw, martyr, had tactlessly remained in immovable dejection where his wife had left him. She now returned to the charge, his listless

lack of momentum goading her on the more.

"Why don't you let me take a boarder this summer?" she demanded. "Let me earn something to dress on. You put every cent into the outside appearance of the house while I wear rags."

"You manage to make the rags appear very well; but certainly you can take a boarder, if you care to make the exertion," he replied.

"And if he proves agreeable I'll elope with him in the fall—I give you fair warning," declared Elfrida wickedly with a reckless toss of her head.

"How you talk, Elfrida," reproved her perplexed husband.

"I won't take it out in talking forever," she declared, preparing to cry in sheer desperation at the failure of her attempt to rouse him.

"Now, dear, don't—please don't," he pleaded.

"You—are—so—cool—to—me!" she sobbed. "You d-don't care for m-me any m-more."

"Why, my poor girl, what's got into you?"

"I want a separation, a divorce!"

"There, dear, don't get excited. You can elope with the milkman if you want to; and I'll run after you until the cows come home, if that will give you any satisfaction," he coaxed with a wry smile.

"The milkman? How silly!"

"The grocer, then."

"You know I wouldn't look at any other man in Coponsett, silly boy!" smiling through her tears. "I love you, dear, love you to death; but I can't stand Coponsett, Amasa, and that's all there is to it. And, oh, I do wish you would wake up!"

Bradshaw went to his office, unstrung. The scene was a typical sample of their almost daily infelicities, the result of pre-occupation on his side and too little occupation on hers.

The Bradshaw cottage was one of the prettiest at Coponsett, as regards the exterior. It was christened the Crimson Ramblers by the editor of the Coponsett

Gazette, who took much pride in his vines, lawns and hedges. Hawthorn buds made fragrant the approach in early spring, and later the crimson roses that gave the cottage its name covered the front porch with a mass of resplendent bloom.

When Mr. Frederick G. Mills, of Boston, came to take up his residence with the Bradshaws there was a temporary suspension of hostilities. He had known the editor as a bachelor, a man of brilliant promise in those balmy days, and seeing the Bradshaws' advertisement had decided that he could not do better than to take up his quarters at the Crimson Ramblers.

But Elfrida had formed the "tantrum habit," and was unable to hold herself in check, even for the sake of appearances in the presence of the "star boarder" from Boston, to whom she began to confide her woes as soon as the first strangeness of his coming had worn away—for was he not, in a way, a friend of the family?

Mills was rather attracted by the editor's wife, and understood the causes of her discontent better than did her hard working, serious-minded husband.

"Don't you find it lonely here?" she sighed one morning as she poured for him a decoction supposed to be coffee. Clearly there was coffee in it, for there were plenty of grounds in the cup, hard grounds, floating in insipid, rusty-looking hot water.

"It is perfectly charming," declared Mills. "I want to be lonesome, crave it; that's why I came here."

"You came to the right place, then; there's no mistake about that. But you are free. When you tire of it all you can go back to the city."

"I intend to live at Coponsett all my life," asserted the attorney.

"How interesting! Who is she?"

"There isn't any 'she.' As a matter of fact, I came here to forget the sex."

"Mercy! And you really think you can succeed? Well, I won't talk to you any more. I'll just let you be lonesome for a while since you think it so amusing."

"I don't deserve it, but please do talk

to me. Your point of view is so different from mine that it quite interests me."

"Does it? I only wish it interested Amasa. He's grown as glum and silent as a clam. You are the first conversable being that has crossed our threshold for months. I can't stand it much longer, Mr. Mills. Sometimes I get so desperate I am ready for any wild plunge. I want to live again. The impulse to drop it all and run away almost overwhelms me at times."

"What would become of your husband?"

"Oh, he wouldn't care, after a little. He'd go on watering flower beds and reading psychology and metaphysics—when he wasn't writing editorials and setting type. He sets all his own type, you know. If he'd only wake up and be more of a man of the world!"

Mills began to realize that he was gradually becoming the recipient of what might develop into dangerous confidences. He could not always avoid getting in the line of fire during the couple's almost daily war of words, and at first it amused him not a little—it was all so trivial and on the surface of things; but he congratulated himself that he had preserved his own freedom from such uncongenial bonds. With an involuntary shudder he would picture himself in the shoes of Amasa Bradshaw, as he heard Elfrida pin-pricking her spouse in such style as this:

"You wonder why I'm making one of the lace curtains you bought for the parlor into a peekaboo blouse? It is because you buy everything for the house and nothing for me. Besides, the neighbors could see right through into the parlor."

"Elfrida, how can you talk so recklessly?"

"Silly! I'll wear a slip, a pretty pink slip, underneath, of course."

"I'm glad you explained. Mr. Mills might hear you. He is a Boston man and would be shocked," reproved the editor, *sotto voce*.

"I hope he will be. I want to shock someone. I shall tell him I am going to leave you and become a ballet dancer, just to see his eyes stick out. I want to

stir up something. I'm so bored and lonesome I don't know what to do with myself."

"How can you talk so, Elfrida?"

"I won't talk any more; I'll act. I'm going to pack my trunks this very minute." She flounced out of the room, and soon the sounds of trunk trays lifted and replaced with rattle and bang announced that the "lady of the house" was giving her husband auricular demonstration of her intention to depart on the next train.

"It's half past nine; I must go to the office," sighed Bradshaw, who had followed her to her room in bewildered abstraction.

"When you come back you won't find me here."

Bradshaw departed, as any tactful husband would have done half an hour before. As soon as his back was fairly turned, the trunk packing stopped and Elfrida appeared on the porch, wreathed in smiles, with a summer novel in her hand.

"I suppose you heard," she whispered half guiltily, half mischievously, as Mills passed out of the front door on the way to his office.

"Heard what?" asked the discreet attorney with an air of well affected surprise.

"Now don't pretend you didn't. I'm simply terrible, Mr. Mills; don't you think so?"

"Terrible? Not at all. You don't look so, at any rate. Is that a summer novel you are reading?" asked the prudent Mr. Mills.

"This? Oh, this isn't new. Nothing but the cheap editions of the *passé* novels ever reach the bookstore here. I pass my life reading old romances."

"Perhaps they are the best, after all. They live on their merits."

"I know what you mean," responded Mrs. Bradshaw with sudden seriousness; "and I'm not half as bad as I make myself out to be—Uncle Mills!"

II

STILL stands the old Vikings' Fort on the bluff at Coponsett-by-the-Sea, hoary with antiquity and redolent of

romance. No spot on the New England coast knows more of love and lovers, of cruel storms and balmy summer days, of every variety of contrast under the sun.

On the shore there are fishermen's huts and net reels, with the reek of dead fish making the vicinity as malodorous as it is picturesque; beyond them are the numerous private boathouses and the Yacht Club wharf; then come the long low verandas and out-of-door dining rooms of the Coponsett House, celebrated far and near for its fish chowder and broiled lobsters.

Half a mile inland, out of sweep of the ocean gales, there is the quaint New England village; and on the Ocean Road comfortable, homely, substantial farm-houses are interspersed with the gingerbread summer cottages of the more transient population.

Such is Coponsett, the secluded retreat selected by Fred Mills as the most propitious for the commencement of his legal career, a career that he had deferred altogether until he had reached the age of thirty-odd, being too busily idle to think of idling in business.

"I must do something, and I want to do as little as possible," he had lucidly explained to his aunt, Mrs. Bruce Ashton. "I've faced the thing out and attended the wedding; but I can't stay in Boston."

"But the idea of going to Coponsett, of all places, to start a law practice—it's sheer lunacy, Fred," protested the good lady. "I really believe that I am at heart more deeply chagrined than you are at Alma's treatment of you—as a matter of fact, I take it as a personal and family affront; but I wouldn't let the world see how hard we are hit."

Her gentle "we" was vastly consoling, but not sufficiently so to convince her nephew that he should remain in the hurly-burly of the city. She had been more or less instrumental in arranging his match with Alma Phillips; but the girl's fancy for a title had proved stronger than her undoubted inclination for Fred Mills—hence the jilt.

"Lady Southdown will never be happy," said Mrs. Ashton.

"Nonsense, Aunt Amy," replied Mills. "Alma was born to wear a coronet. I should have been forced to stalk about on dress parade all my life to keep up with the procession she wanted to march with. Let me alone. I'll bob up serenely sooner or later as member of the legislature from Coponsett County. Just watch me settle down far from the maddening whirl."

"It sounds very peaceful and pretty, but you can't do it, Fred," predicted his mentor. "You'll take the whirl along with you."

"For once you are mistaken, my good aunt," replied her nephew gravely. "My rural rôle in future is to be that of uncle-adviser to the wayward and perplexed in private life, and legal adviser to the captious and querulous, professionally."

After a lapse of six weeks Mrs. Ashton received from her favorite nephew the following account of himself:

"DEAR AUNT AMY:

"To sit twirling one's thumbs and staring at one's name spelled backward on the front office window is the conventional method of preparation for future eminence. For six weeks I've twirled my thumbs industriously. Result: my first client wandered into my office this morning. Imagine it! You can't; but you have brought it upon yourself, and I shall describe the incident at length without sparing you.

"She carried a market basket and wore a poke bonnet; yet, withal, she had an air of rural aristocracy. When this good dame informed me that she was Mrs. Longacre Jones I was highly elated.

"One could not live six weeks at Coponsett without learning something of the wealth, eccentricities and litigious proclivities of that individual and high-spirited female.

"'Before I speak of business I want to ask you a few questions,' she said, as she settled into my visitors' chair. 'You haven't been at the law a great while, have you, Mr. Mills?'

"'Not at Coponsett,' I replied, with diplomatic evasion.

"And you haven't been retained by Jonas Cooper?"

"No, madam," I assured her; "nor am I likely to be."

"Oh, the Coopers will be after you. Shirt fronts are in demand at Coponsett, Mr. Mills. One would think so, at least, from the wardrobe my niece has just arrived with. She is visiting me for the summer. My attic is filled with her trunks. How can one small girl wear all the stuff that is contained in seven large trunks?"

"And how could a mere man be expected to solve that problem, Mrs. Jones?"

"Or a woman, either. I had to pay the excess baggage, Mr. Mills, and they overcharged me outrageously. What with Evelyn and her trunks and the Coopers and their chickens, I have no peace."

"And is it about your niece you wish to consult me, or the Coopers and their chickens?" I asked.

"If my neighbors' chickens run all over my place and scratch up my flower beds, what can I do about it?"

"She had evidently settled down to business. 'You want me to stop Mr. Cooper's chickens—'

"From spoiling my flower beds."

"Couldn't you fence them out—the chickens, I mean?"

"And sue Jonas Cooper for the cost of the fence?"

"Hardly."

"What's the good of that, then? I want him to keep his chickens at home at his own expense."

"It was a poser. I stared at my encyclopedia of law upon its shelf, mentally thumbing the long row of volumes, from 'Abbreviations' to 'Zinc mines,' without hitting upon any topic that seemed to fit the case. Nothing that I knew or knew where to look for touched upon the problem of the wanton and wandering hen, yet I felt that my whole future at Coponsett hung then and there in the balance. I shook my head gravely, determined to make an impression. 'Mrs. Jones,' I said with ponderous solemnity, 'did you ever hear of the celebrated Mr. Toots?'

"Who was he?"

"A great political economist. When asked what should be done with home productions in the face of an adverse balance of trade, he replied: 'Cook 'em.'"

"You mean that I have the right to kill Mr. Cooper's hens when they trespass upon my property?"

"Not the right, perhaps; but you would at least force him to take the initiative, and meanwhile you could supply his table as well as your own with succulent fowl."

"Splendidly atrocious!" applauded Mrs. Longacre Jones. I had pleased my client, even if I hadn't given her sound advice.

"Shall I write to Mr. Cooper a note of warning," I queried, "saying that his hens must elect at their peril between the Coopers' coop and the Joneses' oven?"

"Words to that effect, Mr. Mills; only do not make light of a very serious matter."

"Certainly not," I assured her with becoming gravity. I imagined that the consultation was at an end. But she remained sitting, fidgeting a little as if ill at ease.

"You have done so well, been so ingenious in this instance, that I am disposed to consult you about a property matter of some importance—er—my niece, that is, Miss Lester—"

"I wanted to ask her if the young lady also required fencing in, but before Mrs. Jones had time to elucidate her anxieties on the score of Miss Evelyn Lester there was a timid knock on my office door, and a young lady, attired in a wonderful summer gown of the color and consistency of a butterfly's wing, fluttered into the office, crying: 'They told me I should find you here, Aunt Myra; I have been looking for you everywhere.'"

"Aunt Myra" did not seem at all gratified—in fact, looked rather abashed. 'I just stepped up here on a little matter of business,' she muttered uneasily with flushed face. 'I am going at once; come, Evelyn.'

"But Evelyn did not budge. She

stood in the middle of the room, half turned from us, having become suddenly absorbed in the view from my front office window.

"Her aunt still lingered on the threshold. She could scarcely go out and leave her niece behind. 'Good morning, Mr. Mills. Come, Evelyn,' she repeated, with increasing impatience; but Evelyn paid no heed. Apparently she had been hypnotized by the soda fountain across the way.

"Mrs. Jones sighed and reentered the room. 'Beg pardon, Mr. Mills,' she muttered; 'this is my niece, Miss Lester. Evelyn, this is my attorney, Mr. Mills.'

"Oh, Aunt Myra, were you speaking to me?" exclaimed the young lady with a start.

"I have been speaking to you for the last five minutes, more or less."

"I was wondering when the next mail comes in. Do you know, Mr. Mills?"—as she bowed acknowledgment of the introduction.

"Not until five o'clock," I replied.

"Then we will go now; but I shall have to come into town again at five o'clock, Aunt Myra."

"As you please," responded her aunt, a trifle sulkily, I thought. "I will call and see you again, Mr. Mills, at a more convenient season."

"So they left me. I stared at the door long after it had closed upon them. After a time I collected my scattered wits and indited the following cartel of defiance, addressed to Mr. Jonas Cooper:

"Sir:

"Your neighbor, Mrs. Longacre Jones, has retained me in the matter of the trespasses committed by your poultry upon her premises. You must be aware that this is against the law. Kindly restrain the wandering propensities of your fowls, or be prepared for unpleasant consequences involving trouble and expense.

"There, my dear aunt, you have the picture of your humble servant, at last fully launched upon his legal career. I have even given you a copy of the first legal document I ever perpetrated, minus the letterhead and the signature—which are, of course, the most important parts of it. Isn't it imposing, though?

"By the way, who the mischief is Evelyn Lester? Ever heard of her?"

III

Now that she had pretty effectively broken the ice with the boarder from Boston, Elfrida Bradshaw relapsed permanently into the habit of giving her husband his daily curtain lecture before breakfast, and would waylay Mills with alluring smiles of partial self-deprecation as that gentleman departed for his office.

The attorney did not misunderstand, as a man less experienced in the ways of the sex might have done. One has to be a bit of a connoisseur of women and horses to know whether a certain look in the eye is playfulness or something more serious.

One morning, after about six weeks of this life, Mills was somewhat disturbed by the appearance in his office of Amasa Bradshaw, who sank into a chair with a doleful countenance and an air of dejection.

"I've come to it at last, Mills," he said. "I must have advice from someone, and that is in your line of business—though my troubles are not yet ready for the courts. How long I can manage to keep out of them is problematical."

"Why, what's wrong? Paper in trouble?" fenced Mills.

"No; not business matters."

"You refer to domestic difficulties?"

"What else?" asked the unfortunate husband with a sigh of despair. "You know the whole story. It can't long be a secret to anyone, much less to you. I come to you as a man of the world, rather than as a lawyer. She is weary of domestic drudgery, dissatisfied with the quiet joys of home life and the peaceful and artistic surroundings I have tried to create for her. The plain fact is she is tired of me, and has been for a long time. If you think she really loves me, you ought to hear her talk; but you must have done so, anyhow."

"I have; I couldn't help it," confessed the attorney.

"Well, then, you can form some idea of the sort of life we lead."

"My dear fellow, you take this business too seriously. Women are queer, anyhow," observed Mills, with a fine assumption of sympathetic cynicism. "The fact is, Bradshaw, you are too good a husband. Give her some real cause for complaint. Drink—get good and drunk every Saturday night at the very least. Get in on a poker game and stay out until two or three o'clock in the morning. Show attentions to other women. Abuse your wife roundly when she objects. In a word, be more of a sport."

Bradshaw shook his head. "I wish I were, sometimes," he confessed. "Somehow I can't do it; that sort of thing would bore me to death, and she wouldn't like me any better. You can't win a woman's heart nor hold it by being a brute."

"That's where you're wrong. Most men are brutes, anyhow, and most women adore them for it."

"I don't agree with you; but that doesn't help us solve the present problem. You heard what she said this morning?"

"More or less of it. Her advice agreed with mine. She told you to wake up and not be so serious, or words to that effect. I didn't catch your reply."

"I said: 'There, dear, don't get excited.' She answered that she wanted to be excited; but that no excitement was to be had here, so she was going to look for it elsewhere. Mills, she is going to leave me! She is packing her trunk!"

"What—again? Hasn't she packed it once or twice before since I have been with you?" asked Mills, restraining a disposition to laugh.

"Several times," admitted the editor, passing his fingers, stained by the ineradicable grime of the composing room, through his long, straight hair; "but this time she has put in the wedding silver and the cut glass salad bowl and things of that kind, and I'm afraid she means business." He chanted it out in sad monotone, that showed how utterly oblivious he was to any sense of humor in the affair.

"See here, Bradshaw," cried Mills, "can't we do something to give her a

little excitement right here in Coponsett, and manage to save the situation? Putting in the wedding silver does look serious, doesn't it?"

"Excitement here?"

"It can be created in the desert of Sahara, if one sets about it in the right way. Where is your power of invention?"

"I've exhausted it all on this week's issue of the *Gazette*—and we run a patent inside at that," responded the editor with a wilted look.

"Let's see; wasn't there a poem, 'To a Wife,' on the editorial page?"

"Yes; I wrote it myself, of course. I hoped it might open her eyes."

"You showed it to her, I suppose?"

"Yes, and she sniffed and said: 'Such stuff!'"

"My dear man, it was full of just the kind of uxorious sentiments that are boring her to tears. Now if someone else were writing poems to her she would be piqued, interested. That's the whole trouble, Bradshaw. She lacks diversion. She's surfeited with the unbroken monotony of sheer domesticity. If you could just make love to your wife, you would win her heart all over again; but the only way you can do it effectively, at this juncture, is under a *nom de plume*."

The editor shook his head sadly. "Perhaps; but as I can't manage that—"

"Why not?" demanded his friendly adviser. "You could write her passionate love letters, make verses to her eyebrow, and that sort of thing, to your heart's content—though not for publication, of course. Let someone copy them whose handwriting she doesn't know, and she would be mystified, attracted, wild to learn who her mysterious admirer could be. When she is worked up to the proper point, reveal yourself dramatically, and the victory is won!"

"But she wouldn't be deceived for more than a day or so," objected Bradshaw.

"Oh, yes, she would," urged Mills, with persistent enthusiasm for his unique idea. "From time to time you would make clandestine appointments, which

some accident would prevent the mysterious devotee from keeping."

"I rather doubt if she would make such an appointment, anyhow."

"Why, it's a sure thing!" cried Mills. "Tantalize her, lead her on, play her like a trout, and when she is securely hooked, why, show her that you have lost none of the lover's art that won her heart in the first place. If the end ever justifies the means it surely does so in a case of this sort."

Gradually the solemn countenance of Amasa Bradshaw became illumined with the dawning of the great idea. "I'll do it," he cried, after an indecisive pause springing to his feet and grasping Mills by the hand. "I'll do it—by George, I'll do it! And you shall be my amanuensis and see the thing through."

"I?" gasped the arch-plotter, in weak dismay at the unexpected suggestion.

"Why not? She doesn't know your writing, and you can disguise it a bit, anyhow. I shall need your advice at every turn of the affair."

"But she will see through us sooner or later," argued Mills. "It's taking a needless risk. Better have your office boy do the copying, or some villager."

"The whole story would be village gossip in twenty-four hours," declared Bradshaw. "There isn't a soul I know but yourself that I would be willing to trust in such a delicate matter."

Having thus unwittingly thrust his own head into the noose, Mills elaborated the details of his unique design for inducing the dove of peace to nestle on the Crimson Ramblers. "Now about the poem," he said. "How would it do, for a beginning, to send her some sort of a love sonnet and see how she takes it?"

"Capital! She used to like that sort of thing first rate before we were married, and I have one ready made to fit the case. I was going to publish it next week: 'To Stella'—anonymously, of course."

So Mills opened his box of choice correspondence stationery and took pen in hand while Bradshaw dictated:

"Queen of my heart, thine eyes are passing tender;
I see their glory in yon distant star.

And now to thee my soul I would surrender,
Myself, my all, and fly with thee afar;
For thou art princess, in this night of splendor,
And to the Muse alone thou dost belong;
Oh, spirits bright, your fairest choirs attend
her!
Hers is my passion, hers my gift of song!"

"There, that will do," interrupted Mills.

"Why, there's more of it," pleaded the editor; "a sonnet has fourteen lines, you know."

"Never mind; cut it short," advised his coadjutor. "'Splendor' and 'attend her' make a villainous rhyme, but let it go, if you will only cut it short. Now we must write a love letter and sign some fictitious name."

"How would 'Henry Webber' do for a *nom de plume*?" asked Bradshaw.

"All right," assented Mills. "Now start the letter. Go ahead."

"Um—'Sweet Elfrida: If you appreciate the poem I have ventured to indite—'"

"That won't do at all. Too stiff; limber it up a little. Put yourself in the place of the bold, bad man who is addressing Mrs. Bradshaw."

"You are right. I've almost forgotten how the thing's done. I must work myself into a more loverlike attitude. It won't do me any harm. Please start once more. 'Sweet Elfrida: Your face haunts my dreams. Your fair form is ever present in my imagination—'"

"That's bully," commended Mills.

"If your heart has an atom of pity for me in my wretchedness, walk past the village post office at five o'clock this afternoon, that I may know my hope is not wholly vain. If you appear I may again venture to address you. Fear nothing; I shall not attempt to speak to you until you yourself permit it. Your unknown but ardent adorer, Henry Webber."

When this letter had been duly transcribed by Mills, the hopeful Bradshaw thanked him effusively and hurried from the office to send the communication to his wife.

"Just my luck," sighed Mills. "Heaven send that she'll never find me out!"

IV

MILLS closed his office early on the afternoon of his first client's call and went for a stroll along the shore. It was a gray day, though there was promise of a break in the clouds, heralded by a certain copper glow on the leaden waves as they rolled in upon the sands with a spiritless splash.

"Bah!" he exclaimed in disgust, after a futile attempt to absorb due solemnity from deep commune with the mystery of ocean. "I wonder whether I have really loved anyone—whether it's in me? However, unsentimental people are the happiest, after all."

With which dictum of the philosophy wherein he had sought to envelop himself like a cloud, and bored to death with his own introspections, he now wandered to the post office for the daily "event" of the evening mail.

"Seven minutes to five," he muttered, looking at his watch, as he reached the spot and found the mail still undistributed.

"Seven minutes to five," echoed a voice at his elbow. Mills looked up to find a tall, serious-faced, spectacled young man standing at his side and also inspecting a timepiece. Their eyes met.

"Fred Mills, as I'm alive!" exclaimed the man with the watch. "Where did you drop from? Don't you remember me?"

Yes, Mills did remember him. It was Arthur Peacock, son of a Boston business man, member of the Lobster Pot Club, to which Mills also belonged; educated for a commercial career, but an entomologist by natural bent; somewhat of a prig and, in the view of Mills, somewhat also of a bore. Nevertheless he extended his hand cordially and asked if Peacock were stopping at Coponsett.

"I'm with my mother at the Coopers' for the summer; my uncle's, you know," replied his clubmate of the Lobster Pot.

This was interesting and promised complications. Peacock was of the house of Cooper, proprietors of the errant hens and at odds with Mrs. Longacre Jones, his first client, who had consulted him that very morning.

"How do you manage to amuse yourself here, Arthur?" asked Mills.

"Oh, collecting specimens—bully butterflies in the woods here. I roam around holding heart-to-heart talks with nature and that sort of thing."

"Of course you never flirt with the summer girls here, or manage to catch any sort of a petticoat in your butterfly net, eh?"

"Not in this part of the country; it's an old maid's paradise," asserted Arthur, blushing modestly. "What are you doing here yourself, Fred?"

"Practising law. Just hung out my shingle—isn't it a ripper?" and the attorney pointed to the gold-lettered sign on the window across the way as an evidence of good faith.

"Oh, come off!" laughed Peacock.

"I know you better; it's just a bluff. What's the game?"

"My dear fellow, it's dead earnest; been here six weeks, up to my eyes in work."

"Any clients yet?" asked the incredulous Peacock.

"Lots of them. Had to shut the office to turn away the crowd."

"Well, well, I wish you luck, anyway. I'll drop in and see you some day," and Peacock glanced up the street uneasily. "You must excuse me now; I've—er—I've an appointment with—er—with the dentist."

"His office is three blocks up the street. I must hurry on, too—promised to meet a fellow," said Mills, quite willing to cut short the interview with the uncongenial Peacock. He hadn't proceeded five steps before he found himself face to face with Elfrida Bradshaw.

"Who is that man, Mr. Mills?" asked the editor's wife in a whisper. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes brilliant with suppressed excitement. She had never looked so pretty in her life, Mills thought.

"What man?" he asked in astonishment.

"The one you were talking with just now—the tall, handsome man with the glasses, who stood looking at his watch in front of the post office."

"Oh, you mean Arthur Peacock, Mr. Cooper's nephew?"

"I—I suppose so; his name is Peacock, is it?"

"Why shouldn't it be Peacock?" queried Mills, with a quizzical smile, wondering what Elfrida could be driving at.

"I—I thought I had seen him before," she stammered. "Are you sure he never goes by any other name? Does he write? Has he a *nom de plume*?"

The cat was out of the bag! The bomb had exploded almost by spontaneous combustion. Mills was fairly staggered for the moment, as the idea flashed upon him that the post office at five o'clock was the rendezvous arranged in the spurious *billet doux* from "Henry Webber." Evidently Mrs. Bradshaw had identified his fellow member of the Lobster Pot Club, the nephew of Jonas Cooper, with her mysterious adorer. The spirit of mischief for the moment swept aside his better judgment.

"Now that you mention the matter," he said, "it seems to me I do recall something of that sort. As I recollect it, Peacock sometimes writes for the press under the pen name of 'Henry Webber!'"

"Ah, I thought so!" exclaimed Elfrida with keen interest.

"Why, what made you think so? What do you know about Henry Webber?" asked Mills.

"He was pointed out to me at the theater in Boston as a literary man of note," prevaricated the fair candidate for the Sapphira Club. "What sort of things does he write?"

"Oh, lyrics for the magazines—verses to 'Ethel,' to 'Anne,' 'Mary Jane,' 'Eliza,' and so on—mysterious females who doubtless exist only in his imagination."

"And are you sure that he never writes about real 'Annes' and 'Elizas'?"

"Perhaps he does, dozens of them—who knows? Sly dog, very likely."

"But isn't he always an exemplary young man?" asked Mrs. Bradshaw. "You seem to know him well," with a sly glance.

"Quite well, which is a certificate of his good character, as your remark very rightly suggests. I'll tell you more about him at another time; but I really

must be going on, Mrs. Bradshaw. I've an appointment with—er—with the dentist."

"He's out of town," she called after him; but Mills affected not to hear and hurried away for a rapid constitutional about the square.

When Elfrida Bradshaw had received the remarkable *billet doux* jointly composed by her husband and his attorney, enclosing the mutilated sonnet, she was both puzzled and indignant. For the moment she was inclined to show the communication to her spouse and demand his interference; for, as Mills had assured himself, with all her discontent, complainings and flippant talk, she had never even thought of another man since her engagement to Bradshaw.

Then something about the letter struck her as strangely familiar—distinctive; surely she had seen that aristocratic script before somewhere. She had preserved Mills's answer to their advertisement for a boarder—a possibility both conspirators had overlooked. She compared the two specimens of handwriting. The chirography of Mr. Frederick G. Mills was remarkably similar to that of the ardent "Henry Webber," though the stationery was not the same. Elfrida had her shrewd suspicions; but they began to appear so absurd that she hesitated to believe the not entirely conclusive evidence of her senses, and she sought for some more probable explanation. With the awakening of her curiosity she was excited to the point of putting in an appearance at the post office at the hour appointed by her mysterious but most respectful correspondent.

The tall, sedate stranger, standing watch in hand at such a conspicuous corner and at the identical time named in the letter at once attracted her notice. Until now she had half believed that the whole matter of the love letter and poem was a silly hoax. "If someone is really trying to fool me by any such senseless trick," she now said to herself, "I'll teach him a lesson. If this man Peacock is doing it, I'll teach him one, too, for I know that he is practically engaged to Evelyn Lester, and she won't

relish such doings on the part of her fiancé."

Meanwhile the lawyer walked round the square, and having, as he hoped, dispensed with encumbrances, if not with his misgivings, brought up before the post office again at five o'clock precisely—to find himself once more face to face with Arthur Peacock. At the same moment he chanced to see, over the latter's shoulder, a smart little trap, driven by a girl, enter the square from the further side. Surely it was Miss Lester. And her few words, uttered in his office that morning—not without significance—about the five o'clock mail, flashed into his mind. Of course it was for Miss Lester that Peacock was waiting. The story about the dentist had been only a hoax to "shake" Mills. His eyes sparkled. The plot thickened. He must face it out.

At the sound of wheels behind him, Peacock turned.

Miss Lester bowed and smiled upon the two young men in an impersonal, collective manner that was distinctly clever under the circumstances. It had been her innocent intention that Mr. Frederick G. Mills might take the obvious hint (which had, however, quite passed over his head) and appear at the post office that afternoon. She had known well enough at what hour the mail arrived when she had asked the question. She was aware, also, that it was Arthur Peacock's custom to appear at the post office at that hour and drive home with her—but that couldn't be helped.

It turned out that Mills, with perfect unconsciousness, had taken her hint, and thus it happened that he and Arthur Peacock had met in front of the post office that afternoon at the hour of five precisely. Girls will be girls!

Simultaneously the two men raised their hats. Moved by one impulse they both stepped forward and made for a dangerous post of honor at the wheel. There wasn't room for both by the step, so they gently but firmly endeavored to shoulder each other aside.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Mills," said Miss Lester. "Oh, Arthur, you here?

Won't you be kind enough to step into the post office and ask for my letters?"

Peacock was "kind enough"—because he had to be; but he retired grouchily, compelled for the moment to leave Mills a clear field. How long, he wondered, had they known each other? As soon as his back was fairly turned the feminine diplomatist leaned over from her seat and whispered: "Oh, Mr. Mills, I do hope Aunt Myra isn't going to involve herself in another senseless lawsuit with poor old Mr. Cooper."

"Not if I can help it," assured Mills, somewhat taken aback by her confidential tone, but interested at once by the note of seriousness. "It's a delicate matter, however."

"If I could only explain!"

"I wish you would. It would be a great help if I understood the exact situation."

"Perhaps you would let me take you for a short drive?" she suggested tentatively.

"With the greatest pleasure, if it wouldn't interfere with other arrangements," and Mills looked significantly toward the post office.

"Not in the least. I can drive with Arthur at any time." The words were proprietary; her eyes said that for once she would prefer to drive with Mills. Girls' eyes are expressive sometimes, especially brown eyes with coppery glows in them.

Their colloquy had been pursued in hurried undertones. Mills saw from the girl's manner that more was at stake in the prospective case of "Jones vs. Cooper" than a chicken dinner or the safety of flower beds. He went round to the other side of the trap and sprang lightly into the vacant seat beside Miss Lester just as Arthur Peacock emerged from the post office.

The latter blinked at the couple with owlish surprise as he handed Miss Lester her letters without comment.

"Thank you so much," she said with smiles and dimples.

"Not at all," returned the entomologist gruffly.

"Sorry there isn't room for three, or I'd drive you home. Come along,

Daisy," chirped Miss Lester, flapping the reins and pursing her lips into a whistle. Then she turned to Mills and asked: "What was it Mr. Peacock muttered just then?"

"I mustn't betray state secrets."

"Tell me—please tell me," urged his fair companion.

"I think he said: 'Well, I'll be damned!'"

"How very rude!" laughed Evelyn Lester.

V

As soon as they had fairly emerged from the village Miss Lester began explaining to Mr. Mills how it was that she had ventured to suggest so unconventional an opportunity for a conversation. "I fear it was dreadfully forward," she apologized; "but it was Aunt Myra's fault in the beginning. She promised me solemnly there shouldn't be any lawsuit with Mr. Cooper this summer. That was the condition on which I came here this time. Didn't you notice how she flushed when I caught her in the act?"

"It is a regular thing with her, then?"

"Every single year they have had trouble in the courts and made themselves ridiculous. The Coponsett County records are full of 'Jones vs. Cooper' and 'Cooper vs. Jones' for the last fifteen years and more. Isn't it a shame?"

"Why a shame, if it amuses them and they can afford the luxury?" asked the lawyer.

"Now, Mr. Mills," protested Miss Lester, "this is really a very serious matter. Those two dear old geese think the world of each other."

"Really, you surprise me!"

"It's a fact, just the same. They were lovers as young people. Aunt Myra refused him—got the idea he'd taken her 'yes' too much for granted in anticipation. He took her temporary 'no' as conclusive, and she, in high dudgeon, said 'yes' to someone else. The man she married was simply horrid—made her life miserable. Finally he was accommodating and died, leaving her his money as some amends."

"Why didn't she marry Cooper then?" asked Mills.

"She should have done so, and he seemed to expect it. He bought the place next to hers and built his summer home there, no doubt expecting to woo and win her in due course of time; but to her there was the obstacle of pride. To marry Mr. Cooper now was an admission of her mistake in refusing him before, and his settling next door to her before assuring himself of her answer seemed like a repetition of his old offense."

"It doesn't pay to take too much for granted in this world," observed Mills.

"The failing runs in the family," replied Evelyn with a sly smile. "Anyhow, his manner nettled her, so they have kept up a dual relationship ever since. Socially and neighborly, they assume an almost affectionate politeness, while pursuing a ceaseless feud of lawsuits through their attorneys!"

"How did the lawsuits begin?" queried Mills.

"Oh, it started with the survey. After she rejected him again, she made him move his barn; he was cross about that, retaliated; and they have kept it up like that ever since I was a little girl."

"It all sounds very romantic."

"It is romantic. Who would suspect those two eccentric, elderly people of a tender sentiment for each other?"

"Are you sure it still exists?"

"Certainly; I know it does. And you wouldn't think much of a man or woman who forgot such a thing when it was once truly felt, would you?" He didn't see the point—was quite unaware, in fact, that any was intended.

"I really can't agree with you. Many excellent people get over such an affair in six months," urged Mills.

Miss Lester accepted his cynicism discreetly. She knew the story of her companion's blighted affections, as who did not? The brilliant Southdown-Phillips nuptials had been widely advertised in the social columns of the press, and the jilting of Mills had been emphasized by the fact that the girl had thrown him over for a title.

"What were we talking about?" asked Mills absently after a protracted pause, during which it had not been difficult for the young lady to imagine his train of thought.

"About Aunt Myra and Mr. Cooper," she reminded him, her gentle sympathy granting pardon for his temporary aberration without its being asked.

"Oh, yes; excuse me; of course I will help you all I can in your efforts to keep the peace. But your aunt really seems quite upset over this hen business."

"It was mean of Mr. Cooper to start a poultry yard just to plague her. She takes it more to heart than he does. She scolds about him all day, and then at intervals reads me his old love letters evenings. They're not very exciting; they are such funny, old-fashioned effusions."

"No doubt out of date, but still interesting to her; I see the situation. But the practical question is: What can we do about the hens?"

"Silas Warren, Aunt Myra's farm-hand, has set a lot of traps for them; but as yet he has only caught poor little Mugsey, auntie's dog. That's the way things always turn out with Silas. He is the most wonderful hired man in all New England, and the most ingenious. Haven't you ever heard of Silas Warren?"

"Never."

"You will if you remain long at Coponsett. He is one of our institutions."

"I am going to be an institution here, too, so I shall have a bond of sympathy with him."

"You mean that you are always going to live here?"

"Yes."

"Indeed! I know, or rather I've 'heard tell,' that your Boston friends don't take you seriously, Mr. Mills."

"That's not my fault. They fail to appreciate how I've changed since I left there, what a strenuous individual I have really become. My reputation seems to belie me, Miss Lester. Don't take me on hearsay; investigate for yourself, if you'll kindly take the trouble."

"Oh, I'd rather like to, from what I have heard, you know," pertainly.

"And what have you heard?" curiously.

"Oh, not much, of course, and only idle gossip at that." There was a tone of sympathy and understanding, managed very impersonally, but it did not escape her listener, and it captivated him. She evidently knew more about him than he had supposed—doubtless through some of his set in Boston.

"What gossip?" he asked.

"I'd rather talk about the hens. Just tell Aunt Myra to shoo them out. If we can only keep them from going to law, and induce them to be really decent to each other, he may propose again before midsummer, and we can dance at their wedding."

"I trust we can dance together long before that," replied Mills politely. "Do you go to the hotel hops?"

"Sometimes, with Arthur."

"Arthur Peacock?"

"Yes; we have been friends and neighbors ever so long, in spite of these horrid quarrels. They make it so embarrassing for us!"

They relapsed by tacit, mutual consent into day dreams. Mills quickly scented a new feature in the situation. Was it really the antique love affair, he wondered, that made her so anxious for peace between the two families? It seemed far more likely that she was using him to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for herself and Arthur Peacock. He didn't relish the idea, but it served to arouse his animation. For the girl at his side was as sweet and wholesome as the summer day itself, a fitting object for the platonic, detached relationship he was henceforth to maintain toward the sex. Whatever might be her real motive in enlisting his services, he decided that he would give her a helping hand.

And his pretty companion—what was her day dream? There was a vision of a ballroom, a fancy dress affair at the Westervelts'. She singled out for special observation a little Hebe of sixteen summers in Greek costume that suited the sweet freshness of the childish profile.

To Hebe advances one who has not deigned to don the masque of puerile revelry. He stands before her, this man of the world, in evening dress, and selects her for the honor of the supper dance. How the other girls, her school friends, ogle as the couple waltz together! Oh, he waltzes divinely and talks to her as if she were his equal in social experience. And the supper—such chivalry he showed, such *galanterie*! She didn't mind in the least when he chaffed Hebe for mixing her nationalities and wearing an Egyptian scarab ring—he did it all in such perfect taste. Capitulation was complete on the part of the poor little bud. Supper, *per se*, was forgotten; the host of her contemporary admirers, hitherto quite satisfactory companions, all, were thrust into the background.

And then came the tragedy of it. He was leading her on his arm back to her chaperon. There was a bow, just too perfect to be personal, a muttered conventionality, and for the rest of the evening little Hebe might have been a vision of thin air for all the notice he took of her.

And did Hebe ever meet him again, her beau ideal of manhood? Did she follow his career closely, if discreetly, through the Westervelts and other mutual acquaintances? Did she later hear of a certain interesting climax to his gallantry, the stirring event of the season for all society? "Why, of course; how stupid I am!" the now full-fledged Hebe of seventeen had said to herself. "I might have known. I must get it all out of my silly head." And by dint of resolution and sterling pride she succeeded, at any rate as far as the little head was concerned.

That was the story running through Miss Lester's mind as they drove along through a world aglow with tints of umber and green and gold.

But day dreams cannot be allowed to last very long between almost strangers. Soon they rounded a bend of the road and drew up before the plain, substantial farmhouse of Mrs. Longacre Jones, which stood closely adjoining a modern summer residence, the grounds

divided only by a hedge of white and purple lilacs that were now in the waning glory of their fragrant bloom.

The couple had arrived at a critical moment, at the very climax of trouble stirred up afresh by the further persistent incursions of Jonas Cooper's poultry upon the demesne of Mrs. Jones.

On the Jones side of the lilac bushes was posted that energetic and self-willed female, her arms akimbo and her eyes sparkling triumph. At her side, a step to the rear, stood Silas Warren, tall, gaunt, red-faced, white-bearded, her valiant retainer and henchman. In either hand the hired man of the Jones estate waved, with insolent defiance, a broken-necked pullet.

Hidden from view on the other side of the lilac hedge stood a stout, middle-aged, well dressed gentleman, whose iron gray side whiskers fairly bristled with wrath. His muttering lips and flashing eyes were eloquent to Mills and Miss Lester, who from their point of vantage in the trap could witness the drama complete.

Diplomatically unseeing, the young people drove up to the house, whose triumphant owner now advanced to greet them, and gave an account of her success.

"You've come in the nick of time, Mr. Mills," she cried. "'Cook 'em' was the advice of yourself and your Mr. Toots. Well, that's just what I'll proceed to do, having caught 'em. I'll teach Jonas Cooper that a woman has rights that a man is bound to respect. If he complains he shall know that I have done this under advice of counsel, Mr. Frederick G. Mills, of Boston—and I hope he'll enjoy the chicken pie when I send it to him." Thus proclaiming herself in tones that must have reached the ears of her enemy, she retired within, bearing her booty with her.

"Oh, dear!" bewailed Miss Lester. "How could you, Mr. Mills? You have done it now!"

"Don't worry," whispered her companion. "I'll fix it all up in a few minutes. Just watch me manage them."

So saying, Mills dismounted from the trap, valiantly advanced toward the

Coopers' gate and boldly walked up to the veranda, whither the outraged proprietor had retreated. This was bearding the lion in his den with a vengeance!

VI

As Mills approached, the old gentleman was fanning himself viciously, with an energy that generated more heat than could have been dissipated by half a dozen electric fans running at full blast.

Mrs. Peacock was saying: "Be calm, Brother Jonas; be cool; let it pass; forget it. Please be cool, do calm yourself."

"Be cool—be calm—be calm—be cool!" mocked the irascible Cooper. "Do you take me for a refrigerator?"

"Here comes her lawyer," said his nephew. "I know him; it's Fred Mills, of Boston."

"Now please do extend the olive branch, Brother Jonas," urged Mrs. Peacock, *sotto voce*, with smile serene.

Arthur Peacock effected the introductions, adding: "He's just opened a law office here at Coponsett." Arthur was quite as anxious as Miss Lester to assist in preserving the peace.

"And begins by making mischief between old neighbors, eh?" The old gentleman was fast regaining his good humor and his normal attitude toward the "situation." With him each step was a move in the game.

"Oh, I'm sure, Jonas, Mr. Mills wouldn't do such a thing," said Mrs. Peacock.

"These lawyers are all alike," affirmed Cooper.

"But, really, sir, what have I done?" asked the innocent Mills.

"Encouraged that virago yonder to wring the necks of my finest Leghorns! She would never have acted so except under legal advice. You're worse than your predecessor, old Thompson. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, however," he added more genially.

"You are right, Mr. Cooper. She is a literal-minded woman, as you know. I am to blame, though innocently. I chanced to make an allegorical allusion—"

"A what?"

"I merely quoted from the celebrated Mr. Toots on the subject of 'home productions.'"

"When he advised to 'cook 'em?' Ha, ha, ha!" Old Cooper knew his Dickens, fortunately. "And poor Myra took you literally? I see—I see!"

"Exactly, Mr. Cooper. Mrs. Jones had never heard of Toots, but she grasped with avidity at the idea of reducing your fowls to the common denominator of table delicacies. I am sorry I spoke so thoughtlessly."

"So am I," bridling again. "Prize poultry are not kept for the kitchen."

"Perhaps not; but when she makes the retort courteous, and sends you back your Leghorns in the form of pie—"

"She won't dare!"

"She will. You should accept the gift and close the incident. The score is yours in that case—and I am told Mrs. Jones is a famous cook."

"So she is—so she is," assented Cooper, smiling reminiscently. "I only wish her niece had the accomplishments of Myra Jones."

"Why, brother, how can you? Mr. Mills is almost a stranger," protested Mrs. Peacock in a half-aside.

"He's their family lawyer now, and should know what is going on hereabouts. We have more rows to the square inch here, Mills, than they do in Boston to the acre. I can't call your action professional, and if it hadn't been for your clever and handsome apology, I'd have sued Myra Jones for damages tomorrow morning and I'd have won my case at that."

"Let's not argue the legal proposition," said the triumphant diplomat, with judicial reserve. "My client misunderstood my advice and will send over the pie. That is the end of the matter, I trust."

"For the time being only," grunted Cooper. "I've tried to live at peace with that woman for fifteen summers, Mr. Mills, but it's no use. Last year she cut down part of the lilac hedge—said it was on my land. I sued her and got six cents damages and costs."

"And the satisfaction of victory, I suppose?"

"Exactly. I framed her cheque, and it hangs in my parlor. She complains she can't balance her bankbook. Next time she'll pay in cash—he, he, he!" he chuckled.

"Do you always win?" asked the lawyer, to draw him out.

"By no means. That would be no sport. The year before her cows spoiled my corn. I distrained them and sold them at auction for the damages. She sued me for the value of the cows and I had to settle. That was a body blow! Oh, but she's a smart woman! How she did stick me, though! How she did swear up the worth of those skinny old cattle of hers! I had experts out of Boston market to swear that they weren't worth more than livestock by the pound; but the deacons of the Congregational church here were lined up on her side by that old idiot, Silas Warren, and they swore me clean off my feet." Jonas Cooper chuckled again at the fine points of his litigious adversary.

It was quite evident to Mills that he had made a hit with him. The soft spot in Cooper's heart for the Myra of his youth had sprung responsive to his touch. The call thus happily ended, Mills took a short cut to the Jones house through the lilac bushes. Mrs. Longacre Jones and Miss Lester were waiting for him on their porch. As he stepped through the hedge something heavy fell on his foot and nearly crushed it. An expletive, none too mild, escaped him. The pain was excruciating.

"Oh, come quick, Aunt Myra!" cried Miss Lester.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Mrs. Longacre Jones.

"Mr. Mills has been caught in one of Silas Warren's hen traps," explained her niece, as they hurried to release the victim.

"You must go right up to our spare chamber and bathe your foot with liniment," commanded Mrs. Jones.

"We haven't any liniment in the house," said Evelyn—"except Silas Warren's rheumatism cure."

"Thank you," he protested; "I won't

need anything like that." But he had to go and soak his foot in the stuff to satisfy them, and to stay for dinner to rest his wounded limb before walking home.

On getting back he sat down and wrote a vivid account of the whole proceeding to his aunt in Boston, concluding his letter thus eloquently:

"How is it I have never met Miss Lester in town? She seems to know our set in Boston, is very good form, carries herself well and all that—in a word, is altogether charming. How is it possible I should have missed her when I was in the whirl? Her engagement to Peacock—if she is actually engaged to him—seems a little peculiar. She will be utterly thrown away upon such a stick. Why is it that a bright woman invariably picks out a dunce?"

"I'm getting along very well here, and am gradually extending the protection of my uncleship over the entire village, including the summer colony on the hill. It is an excellent antidote for the blues, affording as it does such an infinite variety of amusement.

"You have no notion of the incandescent glow in one's heart produced by the attitude toward life I am gradually assimilating. The fire of love consumes; but the fire of friendship is like the burning bush Moses saw of old in the wilderness."

VII

"But, my dear madam, I tell you again that I cannot write poetry. I never did such a thing; it isn't in me," protested Arthur Peacock.

"As if I didn't know better! Why do you disclaim your gift so persistently?" replied Elfrida Bradshaw.

They were sitting on a log of driftwood at the foot of the Jones bluff as the moon rose out of the sea and crested the waves with silver.

How came they in this romantic juxtaposition? The explanation is simple. On the morning after being supplanted by Mills in his habitual companionship with Evelyn Lester, Peacock had received the following missive with min-

gled emotions of delight, shocked moral sense and wonder:

Your note is received and highly appreciated. I am so impatient to hear what you have to say that I cannot wait for you to write again; besides, my husband might happen to intercept the letter, and he is so jealous! Since you suggest it so delicately, I will meet you on the shore at the foot of the bluff at moonrise to-morrow night. To save you the trouble of hunting up an almanac, I will mention that the moon rises at eight.

Yours till we meet,

E.

"By all that is wonderful, what can this mean?" muttered the astonished Peacock. "'My husband!'" In all his life he had never so much as cast eyes at a married woman. He was inexpressibly shocked in his moral compartment, inexpressibly gratified elsewhere.

He had been doing battle with his conscience all day, but had ended by keeping the appointment. "I ought to exert the influence I chance to have acquired with this woman to save her from herself," had been his reasoning.

Peacock had never met the editor's wife and had no notion of the identity of the fair one; but he was gratified to find a pretty and attractive woman waiting for him on the shore. After exchanging greetings he had suggested that they sit well out on the beach where they could see anyone approaching in either direction.

"And where anyone could see us?" she asked. "Well, I don't care, if you don't."

"Oh, we could hide if we saw anyone coming, you know," he replied uneasily.

"Why should we hide? Don't look so mysterious and so scared. There really isn't anything so dreadful about our being here."

"On that point I cannot agree with you," declared Peacock with solemn emphasis as they seated themselves on the log. He had forthwith prepared to deliver the homily he had designed for this young woman's edification and eternal welfare, when she took his breath away by demanding that he recite some of his poetry.

"Where did you get such a notion as that?" he asked in puzzled astonishment.

"Why, didn't you send me a lovely sonnet, only yesterday morning?" she queried in turn. Fred Mills would have given his legal income for the summer to be present just then.

"My dear madam, someone has been hoaxing you," protested Arthur Peacock.

"My dear sir, nothing of the sort," retorted Elfrida, mimicking his manner. "It is useless for you to deny it, and too late; aren't you here?"

"Of course I am here," confessed Peacock, so bewildered he hardly knew where he was.

"And didn't you receive my letter?"

"I certainly did."

"And didn't you write me first?"

"As certainly I did not," he declared.

"What! Do you mean to say you did not write: 'Queen of my heart, thine eyes are passing tender?' Have you forgotten that?"

"They may be—in fact they really seem so," whispered Arthur, blushing at his own temerity; "but I didn't write anything like that."

"You thought it, nevertheless; that much you admit, at least," she persisted.

"I think it, perhaps, but—er—I oughtn't to say so; I mustn't, you know," stammered the moralist. That carefully prepared homily, alas, was fast slipping from his grasp.

"What an obstinate young man you must be!" said Elfrida. "What's the use of pretending to be so proper? Would either of us be here if there hadn't been any letters?"

"I must be dreaming. There is surely some mistake. You claim that I wrote you? Would your mind showing me that letter, then?"

"I haven't it with me; I will bring it next time. Please don't worry about it any more; just recite some of your verses, like a dear. If you can't think of any others, say the ones you wrote to 'Anne' and 'Eliza' and 'Mary Jane.'"

"But I never wrote *any*. This is the strangest thing that ever happened to me; I cannot understand it."

Mrs. Bradshaw had not let the grass grow under her feet since talking with

Mills near the post office. Whether the poem and letter were a mere practical joke or a passionate intrigue mattered not two pins to the adventurous Elfrida. The first move in the game was to discover if that ministerial-looking young gentleman were in truth the gay Lothario Fred Mills had sketched him. If Peacock ventured to respond to her invitation, she considered him worthy of any punishment she might devise, whether the letter and verse she had received proved to have been penned by him or not; but she must learn the truth about him before she mentioned the name of "Henry Webber," or she would only make herself ridiculous in his eyes. Henry Webber might be—well, the milkman, for all she knew!

Mrs. Bradshaw shrewdly made up her mind on this first question before she had talked with the young man five minutes. He was incapable of writing such a poem or letter as she had received. Moreover, he wasn't at all the sort of person Mills had painted him. One more score against Fred Mills!

"Do you know, you are a very imprudent young woman," Peacock had at last found voice to say. "You know as well as I do that no 'nice' woman would meet a strange young man in this way. Just think of what might happen if I were—well, like—like ordinary men, you know."

"Why, what would an ordinary man do?"

"Oh—er—try to—er—well, try to take your hand, perhaps."

"Dreadful!"

"Or—er—maybe even try to kiss you!"

"Oh, Mr. Peacock, do you really think so?"

"Undoubtedly."

"But surely a man like you would never do anything like that?"

"Of course not."

"I knew it; I felt it; I knew you were absolutely safe. And your sole purpose in coming here was to help me to be good. To think you risked being shot to do this!" cried his fair disciple. "How noble of you, how brave! How can I ever thank you?"

"Oh, say now, there isn't much risk, much danger, is there?" he asked, glancing uneasily up and down the shore. "I—I don't want any scene, you know; couldn't endure any scandal. It—it would annoy my mother excessively."

"Oh, don't worry, Arthur; my husband is very busy this evening and won't miss me for half an hour or so. But I am terribly disappointed about not hearing your poetry. I could stand the lecture if you were only—oh, one wee bit more sympathetic. If you want to lead me in the way I should go you must show some sympathy."

"I wrote a poem once when I was at school," confessed Arthur nervously.

"About a girl?"

"No, not about a person, you know; it was about clover blossoms and such things."

"How sweet! Couldn't you repeat it to me now? Afterward I'll tell you my faults, and you can tell me how to correct them; but I think you might take my hand while you recite it."

"No, that's one of your faults, madam," and he grew very stern.

"Don't call me 'madam'; call me 'Elfrida,'" pleaded his fair temptress.

"Elfrida what?"

"Why, just Elfrida; or, if you will be so formal, Elfrida Bradshaw."

"Mrs. Bradshaw, the editor's wife?" cried Arthur, for the first time learning who she was.

"Who else? Did you think I was 'Anne' or 'Eliza' or 'Mary Jane'? she demanded.

"No; the truth is, I really didn't know, couldn't imagine who you were."

"And yet you ventured to write to me, a perfect stranger, and appoint a rendezvous! And you respond to my acquiescence in the meeting, and now want to lecture me for coming! Is that quite fair?"

"I didn't write you; you wrote me. You persist in misunderstanding me. I see that you are determined not to listen to my warnings; I must consult with the man whose duty it is to guide you."

"Oh, indeed!" cried Elfrida, magnificently indignant. "That is the return

you make me for risking my reputation to meet you here, sir!"

"But can't you see I ought to do it?"

"Do you always do what you ought?"

"Generally; I try to, anyhow."

"And you wish me to follow your example?"

"By all means."

"Then I am going to put the whole case to your mother."

"I say! See here, now!" cried Arthur, thoroughly alarmed.

"Oh, that doesn't sound so nice, does it? But I am going to do it just the same, and at once." Elfrida rose and began climbing the path, a short cut to Mr. Cooper's house.

"One moment!" cried Peacock.

Elfrida kept on her way.

"Mrs. Bradshaw!"

Still she hurried on.

"Come back, Elfrida; Elfrida, please come back!" pleaded Arthur Peacock.

"Will you never threaten to tell my husband again?"

"No, not unless you come to the conclusion that it is best."

"Then I won't speak to your mother until I come to the conclusion that it is best—and if you are nice to me."

"I will be nice to you; I don't want to be anything but nice to you," he assured her.

"Then promise to meet me again a week from tonight."

"Not before that?" asked the inconsistent Peacock disconsolately. The rôle of "sentimental missionary" had proved a very congenial one. "Where shall we meet?"

"Not here again; why not up there on the bluff, by the Vikings' fort? It's so romantic, Arthur!" and the naughty Elfrida sighed prodigiously as he bade her good night.

"The poor boy will dream of me all night," she mused merrily as she walked along. "If ever a man needed the starch taken out of him, he does. Oh, but this is more like living!"

Then her suspicions reverted to Fred Mills. So it probably was he who dared make sport of her! She resolved to watch developments. Perhaps Mr. "Henry Webber" would be imprudent

enough to address her again. She would keep her eyes open. "First impressions are often correct, especially with a woman," she muttered as she reached home in safety after her first adventurous excursion. "If mine turn out to have been so—well, look out for yourself, Uncle Mills!"

VIII

"THERE is a bit of gossip that will interest you, Evelyn," said Mrs. Long-acre Jones.

"Gossip?" queried the young lady.

"You needn't be so uppish, child; it comes across the water from your cousin Geraldine. The Southdowns are in a row; their differences are already notorious."

Evelyn made no reply, but turned with chin supported on her hands to gaze out of the window. It was raining steadily, just the day for sentimental confidences and mending hosiery. Mrs. Jones was darning the stockings, and hoped to pave the way for confidences if her niece saw fit to make them.

"How do you think our mutual friend will take the news when it reaches him?" she asked, rather disappointed in the result of her first cast, and vainly trying to thread a needle.

"What do you think about it yourself, Aunt Myra?" evaded her niece. "Let me thread your needle for you," she added, proffering needed help by way of tactful diversion, and hoping her aunt wouldn't notice her rising color.

"Go away; don't bother. There! No! There, again; and—no—there, plague the thing! There—the devil!"

"Why, Aunt Myra!"

"I don't care; there aren't any men around. Well, you may thread it, Evy; these newfangled specs you made me buy don't fit my eyes. Let me see—what were we talking about?"

"About Mr. Mills, of course. You were saying that—implying that he might be interested if Lady Southdown and her husband should separate."

"It's the way of the world, his world."

"And then he might be happy again!"

"Isn't he happy now?"

"No, he is perfectly wretched, though he tries to hide it under that *nonchalant* manner of his. He says and does everything with an air of weariness, just as though he had said and done them so often it rather bored him."

"Well, he may be all the happier in the end with that Phillips girl, because she will know better how to appreciate a good husband, from her experience with a bad one." Mrs. Jones sighed.

"I'm sure Mr. Mills looks more like a lord than the man she married," put in Evelyn. "He has an aristocratic air, even when walking a country road in an outing jacket—always perfectly natural, yet always *distingué*."

The wizened face of Mrs. Longacre Jones wore a curious expression. "The young man lost the heiress, with all his grandeur," was her caustic comment.

"Wasn't it shameful?" cried Miss Lester, who had resumed her post by the window, elbow on knee, chin on hand, eyes searching indefinite objects over the hills through the rain and mist.

"Don't be so lackadaisical, and thread me another needle, Evy, please."

As Evelyn obediently twisted her yarn to a point, Mrs. Jones asked: "Wasn't what shameful?"

"Why, the way that woman treated him."

"Perhaps—and perhaps not; possibly he got just what he deserved."

"How can you say so?"

"He was trying to capture a big fortune and grasped beyond his reach; that is the view some people take of the case, at least"—baiting a clever hook for the guileless fish.

"Indeed he did nothing of the sort!" cried Evelyn, promptly "rising to the fly" with sudden fire in her eyes. "He loved her—I know he did, for he couldn't look at any other woman. And she loved him, really. She threw him over for a title, and her present troubles are the natural result."

"My dear girl, he's a fine young man, no doubt. But don't forget that he and his whole family are very worldly. I knew them well, long ago. He's a

regular Jack of Hearts, and has made love to so many women that he scarcely knows how to talk to a girl without making eyes at her."

"He never makes eyes. And if he does make eyes," inconsistently, "I always know it means nothing, and that it's because he's trying to be nice and agreeable. You don't understand Mr. Mills."

"Evelyn Lester, you make me tired," exclaimed Mrs. Jones, caught in her turn.

"How? Why?" innocently.

"If ever there was a sentimental, mushy, gushy Lydia Languish, it's you. Haven't you any sense?"

"Hush, aunt; Silas might hear you!"

"Silas? No danger; he's on the roof mending his patent rain-trough. Anyone would think, to hear you talk, that you were in love with Fred Mills. If so, how about Arthur Peacock?"

"That's just what I have been asking myself, Aunt Myra," laughed her irrepressible niece. "Arthur's good and solid and wholesome, and has kept his ideals and respect for women, where so many men lose them. I ought to love him. At times I really think I do, and then at others I treat him shamefully; but he always bobs up serenely and is just as nice to me as ever. It's tempting Providence to treat a girl like that."

"But, my dear child, you can't be in love with them both at once."

"I don't have to be in love with either of them, and yet might like both very well, in different ways. There's this important point to remember, however: Arthur has asked me to marry him, and Mr. Mills hasn't and never will."

"But you aren't going to marry the first man that asks you, are you?" cried Mrs. Jones.

"Certainly not; not the first time he asks, anyhow. And, too, aren't you my guardian?"

"Yes, but my trusteeship is nearly at an end, you know; before long the money will be in your own hands to do what you please with."

"Shall I be rich, Aunt Myra?"

"Moderately well-to-do, not rich, as fortunes go in these times."

"Anything like what Alma Phillips had?" asked Evelyn.

"Her father made a very liberal settlement, and probably gives her an ample allowance; but your expectations from me and from your father are fully as large as hers; and you have quite as much, if not more, in your own right. So I am prepared to scare off adventurers!"

"Well, don't scare off Mr. Mills, then; he isn't an adventurer."

"He is an excellent young man, with a weather eye to the main chance; that's why I've been so explicit about your property. Don't let anyone lure you with soft words while his eye is fixed greedily upon your pocketbook," warned her aunt.

"Why, you will begin to suspect Arthur of ulterior motives next, Aunt Myra," Evelyn exclaimed. "But I know *him* like my A B C. He is—Mercy! What's that?"

There was a tremendous thump above, a crash, the rattle of broken glass and the fall of a heavy body almost simultaneously, while the whole house shook as from a miniature earthquake.

"My fathers! I do believe that infernal old fool has fallen through the skylight!" cried Mrs. Jones.

"I knew something dreadful would happen if you let him fuss about the roof," said Evelyn, with the air of a prophetess.

A slow step descended the stairs, and Silas Warren, the unappreciated inventor of Coponsett and the lifelong servitor of the Jones family, entered the room, drenched to the skin and looking very sheepish.

"Are you hurt, Silas?" asked Mrs. Jones anxiously as he entered.

"No, not hurt, 'zactly," replied Silas, rubbing his shoulder ruefully. "I do vum, I thought that there skylight would hold for a spell, anyhow, but the frame had rotted."

"You should have known better than to trust to it—a man of your sense."

"So I ought," admitted Silas contritely, "but when I'm through with the job you will have plenty of rain water. I've got the pipes now so they are working great."

"Plenty of rain water, you say? Now that you're through monkeying, we've got lots of it and no mistake. We must get the tin bathtub and put it under the hole in the roof immediately, or we shall be drowned out. Katy, Matilda, get mops and towels and hurry to the attic!"

IX

AMASA BRADSHAW had already gone to his office, but his wife was still lingering at the table over a meal that was much better cooked and more neatly served than the breakfasts Mills had endured some weeks before.

"Will you have two lumps of sugar, Mr. Mills?" asked Elfrida, with her sweetest smile. She had been smiling at him of late in a way to make him feel extremely uncomfortable.

He ate for some time in silence.

"You seem absent-minded this morning, Mr. Mills," remarked his hostess.

"I? Not at all; not in the least," he protested.

"Then why pour syrup into your coffee instead of on your cakes?"

"Did I? Well, I rather like syrup in coffee now and then."

"With two lumps of sugar? I am afraid we do not make it quite strong enough for you here. I wish I knew the proportions you are accustomed to."

"Old Sam at the Lobster Pot, our chef, you know, gave me an infallible rule."

"Oh, splendid! Do please write it out for me," cried Mrs. Bradshaw, as she set pen and paper before him with astonishing celerity. She was a little too quick about it, and over-reached herself.

"Oh, it's perfectly simple," said Mills, taking alarm just in time. In another moment he would have been betrayed into giving her a fresh specimen of his script. "It is the patent cooker that does the business. You can get one at any good hardware store."

"I'll inquire at once at Whiting's general store here, though he may have to send to Boston for me."

"Quite likely," replied Mills, con-

gratulating himself upon his narrow escape, and deciding to beat a safe retreat, he looked at his watch.

"Why, surely you haven't finished your breakfast yet," said the editor's wife.

"I'm not very hungry this morning, thank you," replied Mills.

"Do have some more cakes, and I won't bother you about recipes any more. Do have another cup of coffee."

"Thank you, only half a cup."

When she had poured it out for him she seated herself at his side, and dropping her voice to a confidential whisper, said: "I want to talk to you about something; I need your advice."

Mills wished that he had made his escape before, but it was too late now. "My advice?" he asked, wondering what was coming next.

"Yes; you are a lawyer and a man of the world, and understand everything. You have had so much experience of all sorts, and know just how people look at things." She leaned her elbow upon the table and looked at him with appealing trustfulness.

"Well, how can I help you?" he forced himself to ask, as he assumed that semi-professional air that had become almost second nature.

"Do you think that a woman who is married is laid on the shelf forever? Can't she have any fun at all?" asked Elfrida, voicing the ever recurring protest of the discontented matron.

"That depends somewhat on the woman."

"Well, a woman like me—only, of course, differently situated."

"It depends also upon the *locus in quo*. In Paris, for instance, you couldn't have any fun unless you had a husband. In America, on the contrary—well, husbands aren't so important."

"Of course no married woman could do anything but fuss over pots and kettles in a stupid, gossipy hole like Copsonsett."

"On the contrary," replied the attorney, "I should suppose there would be ample opportunity for harmless amusement."

"Oh, now you are talking like your prim friend, Henry Webber."

"Henry Webber? Who the dick—Oh—ah—yes, you mean—" Poor Mills was flurried into a state of collapse by the sudden blow below the belt. Should he know? Or must he be ignorant? He had forgotten which!

"Why, Mr. Peacock—Mr. Arthur Peacock," said Elfrida, blandly oblivious to his state of funk.

"Oh, yes, of course; I had forgotten for the moment his *nom de plume*. And you really think I talk like him?" queried Mills, collecting himself.

"When you try to moralize."

"You—you haven't—that is, you and he haven't—" stammered Mills, once more thrown off his guard and completely taken aback at the realization of this calamity.

"Talked together? Of course we have. Why not? That's what I wanted your advice about. He had the impudence to write me a letter. I was imprudent enough to meet him, after you had assured me he was a friend of yours; but I am afraid my husband would not approve."

Mills again breathed a sigh of relief. Certainly she had not confided to her husband what he had told her of the alleged identity between Peacock and Henry Webber. That must be prevented at all hazards. What on earth would Bradshaw do if he knew that he, Mills, had actually helped Elfrida to make a secret rendezvous with Peacock? "You really want my advice?" he asked, resuming his professional air, this time with greater assurance.

"I surely do."

"Then it is my duty to say that you are very imprudent, most decidedly imprudent. If I were you I would have no further conversation of any sort with Arthur Peacock."

"And why, pray?"

"He may appear harmless and innocent—"

"He does, very."

"But it is seeming only," pursued the libelous lawyer. "Under cover of his precise and formal manner he cloaks the worst of morals; no woman—that is, no married woman—is safe with him."

"Isn't that dreadful?" cried Elfrida

in affected alarm. "Why didn't you warn me, Mr. Mills, when I first asked you about him?"

"I did, in a general way, if you remember. I told you he was in the habit of writing poems to various unknown ladies."

"But there is no great harm in that, is there?" asked Elfrida, who enjoyed his apparent discomfort.

"He has a regular system," asserted Mills solemnly, deciding that he might as well do the business up brown while he was about it. "He writes a woman verses, sweet, poetical, ethereal verses. Then they meet, and he mildly reproves her for her indiscretion in meeting him and endeavors to point out her faults and reform her character. This excites a personal interest, which he deftly fosters, and before she is in the least aware of his wicked design she is in the toils."

"And to think that I should so mistake the man's character!" sighed Elfrida. "His letter was most respectful."

"Did he acknowledge writing it?"

"No; on the contrary, he claimed that I had made a mistake in supposing him the author."

"I thought so; a part of his system again."

"He says he is curious to see it."

"Of course; wants to regain possession of anything that might compromise him in the future. Ah, he's a clever one. Don't fall into the trap. Keep away from him, but hold on to his letter; better still, destroy it."

"Thank you so much. You see, I needed advice, but I couldn't very well confide in my husband. He wouldn't understand."

"You are very wise; but promise me you will drop this man Peacock altogether."

"I will never speak to him again," agreed Elfrida—with a mental reservation.

X

ON making his escape from the toils of his hostess, the distracted "Uncle of Coponsett" hurried off to his office,

there to collect his scattered wits, if possible, and find a way out of the tangle. While he was vainly revolving all sorts of wild expedients, Amasa Bradshaw entered in an unusually jaunty and cheerful mood.

"Things are going splendidly," said the editor. "Your little scheme, which I at first thought so absurdly extravagant, has worked to perfection. My wife is happy and contented, thanks to your clever ruse; and I am in the seventh heaven. My articles on 'The Trend of Modern Philosophy,' and 'Party Government in America,' have been accepted by the *National Review*. They are to pay me two hundred dollars for each."

"Splendid, old man! I knew you would succeed sooner or later," applauded Mills, with genuine delight in his friend's brightening prospects.

"I am going to hire a cook for Elfrida, and keep the girl we have for general housework."

"She really won't care much about that."

"Oh, yes, she will; and so will we. And I'm going to buy a new rug for the parlor."

"Your wife doesn't care so much for rugs and house furnishings as she does for dress."

"Perhaps you are right," ruminated Bradshaw. "Couldn't we pick out a dress for her and give her a surprise?"

"Is there anything under the sun an editor doesn't think he *can* do?"

"We do manage to cultivate versatility; but what of that?"

"My dear fellow, a camel could sooner pass through a drygoods store than a man select his wife's gowns."

"Couldn't I even buy her a hat?"

"No, not even a hat; your talents are more in the line of verse. Give her the money and let her choose her own paraphernalia."

"That reminds me of what I came for," exclaimed the editor. "We must keep this thing up, Mills. It's working too well to drop it."

"Keep what up?"

"The letter writing business and the poetry."

"Not by any means," cried Mills, with a wry face.

"Why, I thought you were just as enthusiastic as I am at the success of our scheme."

"She suspects me already."

"Nonsense; she hasn't said anything about it to me."

"She does, just the same. She quizzed me this morning, tried to get my handwriting. Things are going wrong, Bradshaw."

"Not at all; they are going splendidly. I've brought another verse and another letter with me."

"But I won't copy them; I've done too much in that line already."

"Mills, you're a spoil-sport; don't let a woman frighten you like that. Take this down, do; there's a good fellow."

"Well," he sighed, "what are you going to spring on her this time?"

"Only an invitation to meet me on the shore at moonrise."

"You?"

"No; I should have said her unknown correspondent. How will this do?"

"DEAR HEART:

"Your sweet response to my note—I watched your dear form pass the post office last Wednesday at five—in token that you do not spurn my adoration emboldens me to write that I shall watch for you on the shore, below the ruins, at moonrise tonight.

"Thine to eternity."

"I say, Bradshaw," cried Mills, "we shall really urge her on to the point of fancying she is in love with someone."

"That was our very idea in the first place," replied the husband coolly; "and when it is all explained, that someone is going to be me."

Mills sighed and said no more. Things might turn out all right, but he then and there resolved to exclude married couples from his list of adopted nephews and nieces.

When a man marries he changes his status, legal, social and financial. What's his becomes his wife's; what's hers remains her own. The legal works on the "Rights of Married Women," grow more and more voluminous. But there

is one right inalienable that does not spring from innovation, appropriated by wives from time immemorial, predating Magna Charta, antique when the year books were promulgated—namely and to wit: the right of a wife to investigate the contents of her husband's pockets!

After lunch Amasa Bradshaw put on his gardening togs and left his editorial garments in his bedroom.

He was mounted on a stepladder, engaged in tying the stray shoots of the crimson ramblers to the upper lattice, when his wife's face appeared at the window immediately above him.

"Amasa!" she called severely.

"W-w-what is it?" he stammered, looking up at her guiltily. There was a Portia-like look on her countenance; and his position was difficult for the preservation of *nonchalance*, let alone dignity, as she looked down upon him and shook her head in pitying reproval.

"How could you be so ridiculous? I have found a letter in your pocket."

Bradshaw turned pale, lost his balance, slipped down the ladder and slid to the ground, gathering roses in his arms and splinters in his legs as he descended. "There, now, you see!" he exclaimed ruefully, with a poor attempt at turning the tables, as he stood at the bottom of the ladder rubbing his barked shins.

Elfrida laughed—he looked so comically guilty; then she peered down upon him with renewed displeasure. "It is too bad you tore the vines, but a guilty conscience, as well as pride, goes before a fall. Come in now and let me talk to you."

Bradshaw delayed only long enough to make up a fragrant nosegay from the dismantled vine, and entered the house, meditating a plausible explanation.

"Now, sir, what is the meaning of all this?" demanded his wife, producing the fatal missive.

"Nothing, my dear; merely—er—er—an effusion from some unknown contributor, sent in for publication in the crazy column of the *Gazette*. I run lots of that sort of stuff every week." Poor Bradshaw was a novice at prevarication.

"That sounds well," she observed

coldly. "Do you mean to tell me you don't know Mr. Mills's handwriting?"

"Is it—er—do *you*?" he asked, turning pale again.

"Why don't you be frank and open with me, Amasa?" she asked, with an injured tone.

"I am, my dear—frankness itself," he protested desperately.

"Then who is Henry Webber?"

"Henry Webber?" asked Bradshaw, with a laboriously assumed puzzled expression, running his fingers through his hair.

"Yes, alias Fred Mills, alias Arthur Peacock, alias Amasa Bradshaw. Oh, you silly boy, do try to do it better next time, if you really want to throw dust in my eyes. I guessed almost from the first."

"But you appeared to be taken in, dear, and—er—it seemed to answer," pleaded her husband sheepishly. "You liked my poem—the verse, I mean—didn't you?"

"Of course I liked it. I have always appreciated your poetry. But think of it, Amasa, getting Mr. Mills to write love letters and poetry to your wife!"

"Oh, but you know they were mine, not his," claimed the anxious Bradshaw.

"Of course they were—I can see that; but you gave them to him to write. Now isn't that the most absurd thing a sane man ever did?"

"It does sound ridiculous, the way you put it," he conceded; "but it seemed all right at the time, and no harm has come of it. I—I wanted to amuse you, you know."

"Oh, you've succeeded admirably," she laughed, pulling his ear as though he were just a mischievous schoolboy; "but did you really think I would correspond with any man like that?"

"You said you would."

"Never."

"Why, Elfrida, you even threatened to elope."

"Why, you poor dear silly, if you had only boxed my ears and laughed at me—taken it humorously!"

"It certainly didn't sound humorous."

"No, and it's all my fault," she confessed generously, her hands stealing up

to his shoulders. "You work night and day on that old *Gazette* until you are so absorbed in it you forget how to laugh."

"It means our bread and butter."

"I take it back," she retorted, shaking him gently. "It's not quite all my fault, after all. What about your wife? Has she no claims? Must she always come last? I'm not the kind of woman that wants a money making machine for a husband, or I would never have married you, dear," she said, smiling at him whimsically. "The strenuous life is all very well in its way; but I wonder how many homes have had their happiness sacrificed to that preachment?"

"There is something in what you say," conceded the editor. "It would make a splendid editorial. 'Reflexes of the Strenuous Life'—how would that go?"

"Splendidly—if you'll practise the new doctrine a little and not take it all out in preaching."

"What do you want me to do?"

"For one thing, help me to make Uncle Mills miserable."

"What for?"

"He deserves punishment; but you mustn't tell him your fine plot is discovered."

"But I ought; good faith demands it."

"Good faith—fiddlesticks—after the Peacock business!"

"What about that? Who's Peacock?" demanded Bradshaw.

Elfrida gave a vivid account of the manner in which Mills had lured her to seek Peacock as the only original Henry Webber.

"He shouldn't have done that," observed Bradshaw, shaking his head soberly.

"Of course he shouldn't," agreed Elfrida, mimicking him.

"It wasn't treating me right."

"Then you must help me to punish him."

"How?"

Elfrida whispered in his ear.

"Oh, I couldn't do that," he exclaimed.

"You must," she insisted.

"It is a wild idea."

"Then I will appeal to Arthur Peacock. He will be only too glad to help

me out. It's only having a little fun."

"Oh, of course, if that's all it amounts to— And you forgive me?"

"Forgive you? The real trouble is, I love you so much that I am jealous of your friends, your time, your paper, even jealous of our lawn, our garden and our crimson ramblers."

XI

FREDERICK MILLS was enjoying a ramble along shore toward the Yacht Club wharf. Evelyn Lester had been very gracious to him when he had the opportunity to enjoy her society; and though her manner was naturally agreeable and her disposition lively and amiable, there seemed a something which gave her amiability to him a faint flavor of the intimately personal. Nevertheless she permitted herself to be monopolized by Arthur Peacock at that young man's whim.

Mills decided to determine whether this monopoly was wholly agreeable to the girl, whether it was the result of inclination on her part or merely of inertia.

As he was turning down the beach, considering this problem and making his plans accordingly, about half a mile from the Yacht Club Arthur Peacock hailed him. "Hello, Mills!" he shouted.

"Going for a sail?" asked the attorney.

"Yes, with Miss Lester. We take a short cruise every afternoon these pleasant days."

"You must be getting to be quite an expert yachtsman," observed Mills.

"Oh, I don't bother with sailing the craft. Evelyn handles her like an old salt. She is right at home with a horse or a catboat, so I always let her hold the reins or handle the tiller. That leaves me free to enjoy myself."

"Is Miss Lester coming down this afternoon?"

"She is over at the wharf now superintending repairs. That remarkable hired man of hers, Silas Warren, is rigging a new balloon jib for us; claims

that it will double the speed of the *Christabel* in light weather. Better come along and see us off; watch how that new sail sends us spinning."

"Thank you; I should like to."

"I'm so glad you came," said Evelyn to Mills cordially, as they reached the dock. "You should take more interest in yachting, Mr. Mills. It is really too bad to shut yourself up in a stuffy old office all summer when Coponsett is having such superfine weather."

"Oh, I'm not there enough to hurt me," he replied, truly enough.

"I brought him along to see us off," put in Arthur, wishing her to understand that no invitation had come from him that would take his rival further than the edge of the wharf.

"But you must come out with us, of course," insisted Miss Lester promptly.

"It wouldn't be safe with that new sail, three in a boat, you know—would it, Silas?" urged Peacock, officiously turning to the hired man for confirmation.

"Oh, I wouldn't think of intruding," rejoined Mills; "besides, you are probably right. Aren't you afraid so much sail will make the boat topheavy, Mr. Warren?"

"It do seem a bit voluminous," acknowledged Silas, gazing critically at his handiwork and pulling his long white beard. "But you see, Mr. Mills, when this here is in working order the wind is supposed to belly under the balloon jib and give the boat a hoist that sort of lifts her over the water. It's an application of the kite principle and the new flying machine idee to yachts."

"It sounds practical enough," conceded Mills dubiously.

"I've figured it out, and there ain't no chance of a mistake. See here, Mr. Mills." Warren was in his element. He produced a bit of red chalk and proceeded to draw a diagram of the small yacht on the rough planks of the wharf. Then he made a rapid calculation, multiplying, dividing, doing a sum in proportion and what not, with a whirlwind of figures and formulæ incomprehensible to his auditors and therefore unanswerable.

"I catch your theory," said Mills with polite incredulity.

"Oh, Silas is all right; I'll vouch for him. You're so mighty cautious, Mills," cried Peacock. "Be ready to shove her off, Silas. Let me help you in, Evy."

But he had reckoned without his hostess. It was Silas Warren who sprang aboard the boat after him and grasped the tiller.

"I want to see how this consarned contraption is going to work before I let a girl handle it," he explained. "Please hoist the jib, Mr. Peacock."

The temporary substitution of Silas for Evelyn was unforeseen, but Peacock hauled away manfully upon the pulleys that bore aloft the remarkable balloon jib, which flapped and belled in the light breeze with curious jerks that sent the small craft spinning about like a top.

"She'll steady herself in a minute or two, as soon as I get the hang of it," muttered Silas.

"It makes me d-dizzy; can't you manage to s-steer the thing?" gasped Peacock, toppling about.

"Don't be alarmed, sir," replied the hired man, with undiminished confidence. "There! What's the matter? Why does the blamed-nation thing act like this? I can't make it out, noway."

"Look out, Warren; you'll capsize her!" warned Mills from the shore.

Then a group of watchers from the dock began shouting directions at him, which effected the usual purpose of scattering his already wandering wits.

Alas for Silas Warren and his patent balloon jib! There came a sudden gust, and in a twinkling the *Christabel* turned turtle and plunged the unfortunate voyagers into the water.

Old Silas dived like a duck and bobbed up smiling, shaking the salt water from his white beard.

Not so Arthur Peacock. As the boat capsized he turned a remarkable demi-vault and splashed at full length into the water, after a fashion describable only in the vernacular of uncultured youth. He came to the surface clinging to the side of the yacht, and calling lustily for help.

He was saved easily enough; in a few minutes both Silas and Arthur Peacock were safely landed on the dock, none the worse for their experience, save for a ducking.

"Gorraye!" exclaimed Silas in deep chagrin, as he stamped the water out of his cowhide boots. "I swan, I must have made a mistake in calculatin' that there sail area."

"Never mind, Silas," consoled Miss Lester; "better luck next time."

Several men had righted the yacht on the beach and were engaged in bailing her out. The balloon jib was in a hopeless tangle and had to be cut away, but the boat was otherwise undamaged.

Miss Lester thanked her volunteer assistants. "We will have our sail yet," she said to Mills. "You will venture with me, won't you, in spite of the *Christabel's* playful preliminary canter?"

"Gladly," rejoined Mills, smiling at the friendly fates.

"I say," protested Peacock, "I'm not so very wet." His teeth were chattering with cold, but he could not endure the thought of seeing Mills sail away in triumph.

"Go home, that's a good boy," urged Evelyn with that maternal air of hers. "Your mother would never forgive me if I took you out in that condition. You'd catch a wretched cold and our butterfly hunt tomorrow would be spoiled."

"It's an ill wind that blows no one good," reflected Mills as he stepped aboard.

XII

It was one of those blue days of late June that the poets sing about. Evelyn Lester wore a jaunty yachting cap and a blue blouse, open at the throat and revealing her well set, sun-browned neck. She grasped the tiller with firm, self-reliant clutch; her eyes were steady, tensely watchful, and her whole bearing one of graceful alertness.

The yacht cushions had been soaked and were left behind; but Mills found the boards of the windward seat comfortable enough, and stretched himself out

lazily with his head pillowed on his hands watching his pretty shipmate through half-shut lids and dreaming a pleasant day dream.

"Why haven't you been sailing with me before, Mr. Mills?" she asked suddenly.

"Why? For the very excellent reason that I have never before had the chance; you are always away sailing with someone else."

"Are you sure that you wanted to come today? I'm afraid I rather forced it on you."

"I am very sure. No one ever forces anything on me."

"Really? How do you manage it? I wish I could arrange to do just what I like and see the people I want to see, just when I want to see them."

Mills did not miss his opportunity. "But you aren't obliged to—well, for instance, to go sailing with anyone in particular, unless it's agreeable to you."

"How can I help it?"

"Plead another engagement with me," audaciously—"or with anyone else equally safe and convenient. If I chance to be the lucky man, call me up on the telephone. I invite you now to take me sailing, or golfing or driving or walking or anything you like, any day this summer."

"That's most obliging; but, after all, it's one thing for a man to monopolize a girl, and quite another thing *vice-versa*. Besides, you might be entangled in an engagement yourself."

"No danger whatever; I'm the least engaged man in Coponsett, and am entirely at your service if you have use for me."

"I know you see my difficulty," said Miss Lester. "Arthur is my oldest and best friend. He is overbearing at times, perhaps, but I rather like it in a way. It takes the responsibility off one. I know how to manage him when I'm given half a chance," and she dimpled reminiscently.

"As you are seeking my advice, have I the right to ask any questions about—well, about our mutual friend?"

"You may take it," she said, blushing.

"Well, then, to begin with, as I understand it, Peacock is on your waiting list?"

"That's about it, I suppose."

"And the list isn't closed?"

"By no means; you see, Arthur isn't the sort of man to let any woman's indecision and caprice take the sterling stuff out of him."

"Bump of self-esteem too highly developed, perhaps?"

"That isn't the way I should put it."

"How would you put it?" he asked, suddenly realizing that he was being slyly castigated by this young girl over the shoulders of Arthur Peacock.

"Oh, I should state it as a general maxim," replied Miss Lester. "I should say that a man had no right to throw away his whole life because one woman at some given moment failed to appreciate him, or seemed to. Life's too long and complicated to justify a man's accepting such a situation as fate's irrevocable decree."

"It's pretty warm to battle against fate today," was his reply. But it wasn't too sultry for him to study the girl's face and read her unspoken sympathy, while she talked so breezily in generalities, though obviously for personal interpretation.

One of those prescient silences had fallen between them. They were almost becalmed. The sails flapped listlessly, and they drifted over lapping swells by virtue of the momentum of a bygone breeze.

"Do you believe in a previous existence?" Mills asked her presently, with sudden inconsequence.

"I really don't know; why?"

"Perhaps it's only a summer idyl; but it comes to me with a wonderful sense of reality that you and I have been sailing together before, ages ago, just as we are now."

"Really?"

"I never had a psychic impression before—I think that's the way to describe it," he resumed dreamily. "I can almost tell how you looked, what you wore; I can catch the tone of your voice—yet the whole thing gets away from me, like the end of a rainbow, just as I grasp at it. Did you ever have such a feeling?"

"No, I'm afraid I'm not sufficiently imaginative," said the young lady, with a peculiar smile.

"Oh, it isn't imagination simply. It's a most remarkably distinct and vivid day dream.—Why, how extraordinary!" he cried, suddenly sitting bolt upright. "I have it now; it was Greek, distinctly Greek. We must have been sailing on the Ægean and picking olives at the foot of the Acropolis—and things of that sort, you know."

"And my hair, was it in a Psyche knot?"

"Exactly, in a Psyche knot." He looked at her with keen interest. "How did you manage to hit it? Have you the same impression?"

"In a way, yes; but you yourself were—well, I won't say elderly exactly, but distinctly mature, compared with my extreme youthfulness."

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed. "That fits in with my conception of it all, too."

"Isn't it odd? As it comes to me I seem to hear dance music, a curious old Greek melody. Was it tabors or accordions the Greeks played?"

"Don't spoil it. I am really serious."

Evelyn looked at him as he lay back with that puzzled expression, striving to grasp the elusive fabric of his day dream. How easily she could burst the pretty bubble! But it would be too bad to waken him so suddenly.

"I wish I could help you," she said. The only aid she could give him would have spoiled the whole illusion; and it was too delightful a game to end it so abruptly. "And you can give me no more detailed picture of my appearance?"

"You really must forgive me; all I know is that you looked very charming, as you always do."

"Of course," with a pert inclination of her head. "What makes you say that?" she asked quickly on a different note. Aunt Myra had accused him of flirtatious habits, and she had denied it on his behalf. Which one was right?

"Oh, well, you know, your own memory records me as an elderly uncle; and so I dare surely speak the truth without

blushing. If I seemed to you so antique then, what must I seem now? A veritable grandfather, I should think—with the years that have passed in the meantime—and other things that happen—" He trailed off aimlessly.

"A man is expected to have knocks in the world," she said gently. "If he is worth his salt he will be stronger for them. There is no need for him to lose his youth or his *joie de vivre*."

"No doubt knocks are good for one, theoretically; but don't you bat me over the head just for the sake of my constitution," he replied, trying to regain inconsequence, as the boom swung over his head and he ducked to miss it. The breeze was springing up again.

"That's the way you have of turning everything into—into nothing. I shall take you home." And Evelyn Lester put the *Christabel* about and steered for the dock.

"We seem to have kept a rather zig-zag course," she remarked apologetically.

XIII

"But what can we give him to eat?" cried Evelyn Lester, when a few days later her aunt told her that she had invited Mr. Mills to dine with them.

"He can't be so very particular, if he can stand the fare at the Bradshaws'," replied Mrs. Jones. "Why he should stay there with them is a mystery."

"Not at all; he is an old friend of Mr. Bradshaw's. But I do know this: he is particular, one of the most finical of men. We must manage to give him something especially good."

"If I had known that I wouldn't have asked him. I didn't expect to serve a banquet, Evelyn," and her aunt looked distinctly worried.

"Of course not; but as it's Christine's afternoon out, what's to be done?" questioned her persistent niece.

"Oh, she will be back before six and can put something together."

"At what time is he coming?"

Mrs. Jones took Mills's note of acceptance from her workbasket and handed it to Evelyn. "My specs are upstairs; look it over for me and see."

"Oh, that's all right; not until seven. There will be plenty of time for Christine to prepare the ordinary dishes; but I will get up an extra delicacy this afternoon myself."

"You?"

"Yes; why not? Didn't you know I went to cooking school last winter?"

"Well, if he can stand Mrs. Bradshaw's messes, he's equal to cooking school diet," said her aunt. "Go ahead, by all means."

"I'm going to make some sponge cake and some prune soufflé," asserted Evelyn, with a determined air.

"But you won't have time, my dear. I see Arthur Peacock coming across the lawn."

"All the better; I'll make him help," and Evelyn dimpled in anticipation.

So Arthur Peacock was conducted into the kitchen and whirled the egg beater zealously, while Evelyn bustled about in a gingham apron, with sleeves tucked up, exhibiting tantalizing glimpses of arm and elbow.

"Now this is the sort of thing I approve of," said Peacock solemnly. "I only wish mother could see you now. She'd understand you better, wouldn't think you so frivolous."

"Does she think that? I wonder where she managed to get that idea of me?"

"Well—er—you told her once that you were wearing a rat, you know. It was very unfortunate. She talks of it continually. I hate to think of a girl like you wearing another woman's hair. You will have to give up that sort of thing when we are married."

"Really? Well, I will, if that ever happens. But where's the harm? Why shouldn't a girl have the right to make herself as attractive as she can?"

"There's a certain falseness about it."

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" muttered Evelyn.

"Of course," continued the preacher, "a man like Mills would laugh about it and wouldn't disapprove. He admires the kind of women who paint and powder and all that."

"Arthur Peacock, you ought to be ashamed to talk so!" cried Evelyn indignantly, as she banged the oven door shut with unnecessary force.

"I have it straight from mother. She says he's been a fast man."

"Then I'll give you something straight from me. Mr. Mills is above any such thing. Besides, what right have you to say anything of the kind to his friends behind his back?"

Peacock thought it wise to change the subject. "Why is the best china laid out?" he asked. "Is Mrs. Jones going to have company?"

"Yes."

"May I ask who is coming?"

"Mr. Mills."

"See here, Evelyn," cried Peacock, dropping a tin dish with a bang, "this won't do! You aren't treating me right! Why didn't you tell me?"

"Why, if you don't want to help me, I can get along all right. You can go home if you want to."

"Now, Evy, please don't be cross."

"I can't help it; I'm all out of patience with you, Arthur."

"Why, what have I done?"

"You talk so disagreeably about everyone."

"Why, I haven't said a word about anyone but Fred Mills. But I want you to know that he isn't the man for you, Evelyn. If you think that disagreeable, I can't help it. It's my duty to say so."

"Why, what nonsense you're talking, boy! Mr. Mills hasn't a thought of me, of that kind, in his head."

"You wait. He's lining up; and what's more, he's after your money. His love, or what he calls love, belongs to another woman."

"I know all about that; she's married."

"And you approve? Well, I am astonished. I never thought you, of all people, would stand up for him in that"; and Peacock removed his glasses and polished them excitedly, preparing another homily.

"What in the world are you talking about? She jilted him and married Lord Southdown; Mr. Mills can't be blamed for that!"

"Oh, I didn't mean the Southdown business. I'd forgotten all about it; and what's more, so's Mills—if it ever

troubled him much. I meant another married woman."

Evelyn looked at him in a curious way. He had never seen just that expression on her face before. "What do you mean to insinuate?" she asked tensely.

"Why, it's village gossip. Ask anyone in town—that is, any villager."

"I never listen to gossip," crushingly.

"Which is a serious mistake. Your good friend Mr. Mills is no better than he should be. Neither is the editor's wife."

"Would you dare insinuate such a thing in the presence of Mr. Mills?"

"If you care to have me. I am not afraid of him. It's the truth; I am practically certain of it. They are constantly seen together *lête-à-lête*, while Bradshaw's away at the office."

"Go home, Arthur Peacock; go home. You have spoiled my evening, if that's what you came for. If there is one thing I simply loathe it's tittle-tattle. It's nauseating."

"I can't help it. It was my duty to put you on your guard against that man."

"A very agreeable duty, you seem to think. Now, listen to me, Arthur; never speak to me of Mr. Mills again until you are ready to do so in his presence, when he can defend himself."

"I have your permission to do that?"

"You have. Now go; I can't stand any more today."

Arthur obeyed submissively; and after Evelyn had completed her culinary operations she went to her room. Her aunt found her not far from tears.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked the good lady.

"Arthur has been repeating some vulgar village talk he has heard about Mr. Mills. I don't believe it; but it makes me wretched to think that people can say such things. They do it with such gusto. I feel almost ready to hate Arthur; it's such meanness."

"I don't believe it for a minute," said her aunt. "However, remember that we've not known Mr. Mills very long, and it behooves us to be circumspect. Arthur's still a boy, you know; he'll learn to be a man in time."

As that young man crossed the way to his uncle's he reflected: "I've given her something to think of, anyhow, and spoiled the fellow's dinner for him." Then he meditated a plan for effecting a *coup* which should dispose of his rival once and for all. Elfrida Bradshaw was to meet him again that very evening, and had promised to bring with her the mysterious letter she had received. Putting two and two together, Peacock suspected that Mills was at the bottom of it all. With such proof as he believed the letter itself would constitute, he would be ready to accept Evelyn's challenge and face Mills with his perfidy in her presence.

Mills arrived in due season, in response to Mrs. Jones's invitation to dine *en famille*, and nothing in his reception by Miss Lester revealed that she had helped to cook his dinner and then worried the rest of the afternoon on his account. She seemed even more cheerful and light-hearted than usual.

It goes without saying that the conversation at once turned upon the latest offense of Jonas Cooper.

"What do you think he has done now?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"I couldn't guess," said Mills, exchanging deprecating glances with Evelyn.

"He has bought a horse, a regular circus horse, that jumps a four-foot stone wall without turning an eyelid, sits upon its hind legs and paws the air, and all such fool tricks. And the point of it all is that my part of the boundary is next to the stable yard."

"You mean that you are under contract to maintain that part of the wall?"

"Yes, that's the meat of the whole business. Mr. Cooper has just served notice on me through his lawyer that I must raise my wall three feet, or stand any damages that may result from the trespasses of Mehitabel."

"Mehitabel?"

"That's the name of the horse. What can I do about it? Has he the law on his side?"

"Better raise the wall," Mills advised carelessly; "and may I have an-

other helping of that delicious prune soufflé?"

"I'll see Jonas Cooper in Jericho before I raise that wall an inch!" declared Mrs. Longacre Jones.

"Then impound the horse, if it ventures into your garden, and sell it for damages."

"That's just what he's playing for. He will sue me for her value, the way I did him in the case of my cows. He can swear it up to three or four thousand dollars. I won't give him the satisfaction."

"Then all you can do, as far as I can see, is to watch out and scare the animal away, if it ventures to this side of the boundary."

"I only wish Silas could shoot it."

"Now Aunt Myra," interposed Miss Lester, "don't be so absurd. If that horse with the ridiculous name breaks into our yard, I'll promise to drive him out myself. Meanwhile, let's get Silas to invent some kind of a shoo machine that will act automatically; he's so clever at that sort of thing, isn't he, Mr. Mills? You can vouch for his hen traps anyhow."

"I certainly can," laughed Mills; "but I can see no way but some form of strategy."

"As you please," retorted Mrs. Jones; "but I'm not going to have my flower beds run over, my lawns trampled and my vines pawed by that piebald monstrosity; and I'm not going to build stone walls to please Jonas Cooper. I'd better go and consult Silas at once and see what he can suggest."

XIV

MILLS and Miss Lester had scarcely seated themselves on a garden bench to enjoy a quiet hour in the fragrant evening air when Mrs. Jones and Silas Warren appeared in the vicinity. They were inspecting the wall that divided the garden from the Cooper stable yard.

"I won't spend a cent—not a cent, Silas," declared Mrs. Longacre Jones.

Evelyn tapped her foot on the garden walk with growing impatience. "I can't

stand this any longer," she exclaimed. "If we stay here I shall be drawn into the argument, and we shall be talking about that old wall all the evening. Aunt Myra has grown so obstinate I have no patience with her. Let's go over to the bluff."

"By all means. We can inspect the Vikings' fort. By the way, did the Norsemen really build it, do you suppose?"

"Perhaps; it's certainly policy to stick up for the legend; it would ruin the place to explode it. Aunt Myra has been offered a fabulous sum for it by the Massachusetts Historical Society; but she says she won't permit them to make such fools of themselves."

"And who do you think did build the thing, anyhow?" asked Mills.

"Silas says it was a smugglers' roost and an illicit still in Colonial days."

The sun had just set as they reached the ragged old pile of stone that overlooked Coponsett Bay. Whether built by Norse pirate or Yankee moonshiner it was an imposing structure, well adapted in its atmosphere to the development of tender sentiment when the moon shone on it from the right quarter and touched with silver radiance its broken gray stone turret.

On the rocks they found a perch which commanded a wide sweeping view of sea and shore, while directly below them, at the root of the precipitous cliff, was a narrow belt of sand, and then the white fringe of surf, whose monotone mingled with the evening pine anthem of the wooded hills back of them. A delicious sea breeze was blowing in, and Evelyn took off her hat, a fetching Leghorn trimmed with big pink roses, to let the cool wind blow full in her face. There were crimson glows over the woods behind them. The moon shone shadowless in the half-light. Fred Mills thought he had never seen anything quite so original in piquant loveliness as the picture before him. They sat for some time in silence.

At last Miss Lester broke it with a shiver. "Isn't it spooky here!" she remarked. "Mercy, what's that? Oh, dear, my hat!"

A mischievous gust of wind had laid hold of the dainty Leghorn and sent it careering along a wall of the ruin and out of their sight.

"Really, that's too bad," she lamented. "It only came from New York this morning, and I put it on for your special benefit."

"Oh, there's probably no real harm done. I'll run and get it," consoled Mills, "if you don't mind my leaving you here alone for a minute or so."

He got up and disappeared around a corner of the ruin, climbing a pile of fallen stonework, following the direction in which the errant hat had disappeared. He finally caught sight of it lodged against a rock.

On the other side of that same rock he saw an apparition that might well give him pause. Two figures loomed up before him out of the twilight, sitting compellingly loverlike, withal trying to read in the gathering gloom from something which they held together. Instantly he recognized, with acute dismay, Mrs. Bradshaw and Arthur Peacock.

What was to be done? The hat had lodged only a few yards from where they sat, luckily with their backs turned toward it. But it would be a perilous task to get at the unlucky headgear undiscovered; and yet it must be accomplished somehow, for he would not have Evelyn behold his handiwork for anything. He hadn't reckoned on any such outcome as this when he had pointed out the famous "Henry Weber" to Mrs. Bradshaw at the post office. What was Elfrida thinking of, after she had promised him so penitently to have no further conversation with the wicked Peacock? He reconnoitered for cover and advanced cautiously.

It was the voice of the editor's wife that first caught his ear. With a shudder he heard her repeating the now too familiar lines:

"Queen of my heart, thine eyes are passing tender;
I see their glory in yon distant star!"

"It looks very much like Mills's writing; but I can soon tell for certain when I have a chance for comparison," he heard Arthur Peacock say.

"To think of his disowning a poem like that, and attributing it to you!" exclaimed Elfrida.

"I should be ashamed to write such stuff," cried Arthur in virtuous indignation.

"But what makes you say this is bad? It sounds rather pretty; that's why I thought you wrote it."

"But it is so vile in its purpose, so wicked in its design. How can he enter the home of his friend and dare to write such stuff to that friend's wife?"

"And he is *so* fascinating," sighed the mischievous Elfrida. "Think of what might have happened to me, Mr. Peacock, if I had not met you and had the benefit of your noble precept and honorable example before it was too late!"

"You *were* fortunate; and I am going to keep this poem and this letter," he announced with stern resolution.

"Oh, no, you mustn't; I couldn't allow it; your injured feelings might lead you to make trouble," she protested, as she permitted him to take the papers from her with just enough resistance to lend them greater value in his eyes.

"No trouble I can make will be too great in view of that villain's offense against the sacred laws of hospitality," tragically.

"Perhaps; but don't be too hard on him. Couldn't you just take him aside and show him the error of his ways—as you have me? I know it would do him good."

She almost choked with laughter as she pictured the scene to her lively fancy. Peacock, the while, was silently preparing the suggested homily.

It never occurred to the prankish Elfrida that Peacock, with all his big talk, would do more than get the laugh on Mills, just between themselves. Had she guessed the inexperienced capabilities of the young man she believed she had gauged so cleverly, she would have thought twice before putting such weapons into his hands.

Mills had at last secured the hat and waited to hear no more, though his curiosity was as great as his alarm. He feared Miss Lester might become impatient and wander after him. He had

heard quite enough, however, to give him food for very serious reflection, and he effected a cautious retreat, wondering desperately what could be done to avert the calamity he saw impending.

Meanwhile the couple behind the ruin lingered for some time after Mills's departure.

"You will never know how much good you have done me, Arthur," sighed Elfrida. "I tremble to think what would have happened to me had you been different, more like other men"; and she sighed again very deeply.

"Oh, but perhaps I am not so very different, after all, you know; I've my proper supply of red corpuscles, I hope. Everything that's nice is *not* naughty. A man may be a little—well, natural, now and then. For instance, holding hands *can* be done harmlessly, you know." He held out his to her.

"How could you?" she reproached, refusing to see his outstretched palm.

"I don't know," murmured Arthur, trembling at his own boldness. "It was an irresistible impulse. I can't explain it in any other way, Elfrida. I wanted to, and—and courage came to me."

"Then I think it's time I said good night, Mr. Arthur Peacock," and she marched off with such an air that not even his newborn courage urged him to follow her. He felt decidedly snubbed.

XV

It is often but a trifling incident that gives the clue to the very heart of life's maze. As Mills walked back to Miss Lester the whole situation at once clarified itself and assumed a new complexity. With the realization of what it meant to him to be degraded in the eyes of Evelyn—and obviously that was the use to which Peacock would put the papers—he saw in a flash that he was deeply in love with her. This was the silken thread by means of which he must find his way out of the labyrinth, but the latter was more intricate than ever.

Her delicate sympathy, her womanly tactfulness, her light and joyous girlishness, as they had revealed themselves

to him in the course of the last few weeks, had stolen upon him unaware and captivated him with their gentle charm, so gentle that he had scarcely appreciated how necessary they had become to him.

Yet it was just this very revelation of himself to himself that served to show him how impossible it would be to enter into any explanation with Evelyn that would rid the episode of the letter and the poem of a certain taint of sordid vulgarity, in spite of the fundamentally innocent nature of the fooling that had given them birth. The melodramatic stupidity of the uncharitable Peacock would make all reasonable explanation difficult at best. It is one of the hardest things in the world seriously to expound a jest.

"How long you were! You must have had trouble in finding it," said Evelyn, smiling up at him as he handed her the hat. "I think perhaps we must be going back now; it has just struck me that I must write a note tonight."

So they strolled along by the footpath leading to her aunt's, keeping silence for a while. "You seem pre-occupied," said Evelyn at last. "Ever since the moon rose you haven't been quite yourself."

"It's the woman in the moon perhaps," he answered with a light laugh, as he tried to pull himself together.

"The lady is notoriously inconstant; is that what you mean?" she asked, with her little knack of semi-motherly tenderness.

"You've guessed it," he confessed in a confidential whisper. "Inconstancy was in my thought; but it's man's vacillating disposition, not woman's, that concerns me just now."

"You mean—well, what *do* you mean?" She was much puzzled. "I don't think I quite understand," said the girl meditatively. "Of course I haven't wide experience. You are a man of the world—"

"Please, please, *please* don't say that to me. I've been called a man of the world so far by every single person I have talked with for five minutes in all Coponsett. Every soul that has come

into my office has whispered in my ear: 'I want to ask you a question, Mr. Mills, because you are a man of the world. I should like to have you tell me what crops to plant for next spring's market—how to kill potato bugs—how to paint a house—how to skin a muskrat—how to black tan shoes—how to do anything and everything under the sun, because, you know, you are a man of the world.'"

"You see how you impress people. It is because you have placed yourself in the wrong pew, Mr. Mills. When Satan fell all the little imps must have consulted him about the latest fashions from Paradise."

XVI

ELFRIDA BRADSHAW sat on her veranda behind the crimson ramblers in high good humor with herself. Things were coming her way. She had managed to surround herself with an atmosphere of mystery and amusing intrigue. She no longer had the least inclination to scold her husband or to threaten to leave him for the joys of a gay city life. Moreover, they were now more prosperous, and her new hat was a dream!

Mr. Mills was rather late in returning home that evening, but Elfrida could enjoy the balmy night air and the pleasures of anticipation. So she sat in her flowery ambuscade smiling to herself. It was after ten o'clock when her boarder came sauntering up the steps of the porch.

"At last," sighed Mrs. Bradshaw.

"At last?" echoed Mills. "You thought I was your husband. I'm sorry to disappoint you; it's only the lodger."

"Oh, Amasa won't be back for an hour yet; and, worse luck, he has the key."

"How unfortunate!" exclaimed Mills, fumbling in his pockets.

"It isn't any use feeling for it; you left yours on your bureau; I saw it there this afternoon. I forgot mine, too, when I went out for a walk, and it's Susan's night out. She locked the back door when she went and took her key with her."

"And you have been sitting here all alone?" asked the unsuspicious Mills.

"All alone for a whole hour; think of it! But I don't mind at all, now you have come—if you don't. I hope you aren't sleepy."

"Where's Mr. Bradshaw?" queried her unwilling captive nervously.

"Over at East Coponsett at the School Board meeting. It's five miles away and no telephone. It's just as quick for us to sit here and await his return as it is to send for the key, and far less strenuous."

Mills capitulated. The *tête-à-tête* seemed inevitable, though it was just the sort of thing he had prudently resolved to avoid.

"Isn't it a lovely evening?" sighed Elfrida, after waiting in vain for him to start the conversation.

"Delightful, magnificent!" responded Mills with hollow enthusiasm.

"We see so little of you now; I suppose you have been working at your office all the evening?"

"Yes—that is, most of it; working hard."

"What a recluse you have become! Think of what you are missing these early July days. Isn't an evening like this enough to lure you from the 'demmiton grind' and inspire your thoughts?"

"It ought to be," he conceded grudgingly.

"Couldn't you make up a poem about it?" insinuated the editor's wife.

"Unfortunately I am not gifted with a poetic mind," he protested.

"Oh, but I happen to know better. I have learned it by heart, Mr. Mills:

"Queen of my heart, thine eyes are passing tender—"

"S-s-s-h! Hush!"

"I see their glory—"

"Please don't!"

"—in yon distant star."

"Please, Mrs. Bradshaw—"

"And now to thee my soul I would surrender, Myself, my all, and fly with thee afar; For thou art princess in this night of splendor."

"Oh, it's perfectly beautiful, Mr. Mills, and makes one want to hear the rest, for there must be more to it."

"Really, Mrs. Bradshaw, I'm sorry I ever wrote it. At least, that is, I didn't really, you know; I—I don't know what possessed me—unless—well, I—I'll own up. You seemed unhappy, wanted excitement, so I penned those lines to stir things up a bit in this slow town." He could not give Amasa away without first consulting him.

"Well, you succeeded, didn't you?" asked Elfrida with a mischievous laugh. She knew he must be puzzling about his duty to Amasa in the affair.

"Only too well, apparently," sighed Mills. "Would you mind returning my effusion and the letter that accompanied it? Since the cat is out of the bag, they should be destroyed at once."

"I can't very well return them, just yet. I showed them to Mr. Peacock—you practically told me he wrote them, you remember—and he kept them."

"How could you do such a thing? Think of the possible consequences!" cried Mills, rejoicing that she had confessed her imprudence so readily.

"Don't be alarmed. He is going to give them back to you himself, with a lecture on the error of your ways—which I trust you will find entertaining and instructive. It's only fair you should listen to one of his sermons, after the way you beguiled me."

"Oh, I'll forgive you, if nothing worse than that comes of the escapade," laughed Mills grimly. "But it is dangerous for us both to place such fireworks in the hands of an ass like Peacock. The fact is—well, I'll tell you, Mrs. Bradshaw, seriously. I love a dear girl, the sweetest girl in the world; you wouldn't wish me to be placed in the wrong light with her?"

"How many 'dear girls' do you manage to adore in the course of a year, Mr. Mills? Let's see; there's Anne and Eliza and Mary Jane, and I've forgotten all of Mr. Henry Webber's affinities! Who is the lady just now standing with you 'on the green carpet'?"

"You can guess."

"Whew!" she whistled. "Of course! Now I see why you're in such a fuss about the letter! How blind I've been, to be sure! Of course, it's Miss Lester."

"You have me fairly caught, I confess," murmured Mills, convinced that frankness was henceforth his only safe role with Elfrida Bradshaw. "I surrender at discretion. Do please forgive me if I have really offended you, and help me get those wretched documents out of the hands of that ass, Arthur Peacock."

"Is it really as bad as that?"

"It really is, I assure you. He regards himself as practically engaged to Miss Lester, though I'm sure she doesn't care two straws for him in that sort of way. He's jealous as Jupiter. Should he take it into his head to show those papers to Miss Lester, it would ruin my chances with her. A jest of that sort is incapable of explanation when taken seriously."

"He wouldn't do anything like that, would he? Why, that would be dishonorable!" exclaimed Elfrida in genuine alarm.

"That was his real purpose in securing their possession. Can't you manage in some way to get them back from him before he has a chance to do any mischief?"

"Let me see," mused Elfrida. The problem was a congenial one, and her solution was characteristic. "Look him up early tomorrow and lead the subject round so he will talk to you about it; he'll do so readily enough, merely to enjoy his triumph and gloat over your downfall. Be very meek and humble with him. Agree to leave Coponsett immediately; give me up—anything, if he will only promise not to show the letter to my husband!"

"That's a good idea," agreed Mills; "only, you must be sure to explain things to Amasa first. He doesn't know about the Peacock business."

"I'll try, though I fear I shall have more trouble with Amasa than you'll have with Mr. Peacock. I only hope he won't decide to shoot both of you at sight—but in any event he will see the importance of getting the letters out of Peacock's hands. Once regained and destroyed, we can both safely deny that they ever existed—which in your case is a plain duty, to protect my reputation!"

"Oh, that was in no danger."

"In any case, you must promise, if I get the papers back, that you will never mention them to Miss Lester or anyone else."

"Surely not," agreed Mills, rashly burning his bridges behind him.

"Thank you." The notion of her escapade coming to the ears of a girl like Evelyn Lester was not at all to her fancy. "And what do you think of my plan for solving the difficulty? If it pans out, I shall only add it to the other side of the ledger, you know; for self-respect's sake I must get even with you some time."

"Forgive and forget," pleaded Mills. "With your help I may win out yet; until then, no more tricks, if you please. It's a truce between us?"

"My hand on it; a truce only, though."

Mills raised the fair hand of Elfrida Bradshaw to his lips and kissed it cavalier fashion. He felt he must placate her at all hazards; but he failed to count the cost.

"Hello there! Hello!" shouted a voice from the hawthorn hedge.

Mills sprang back from his compromising attitude. Entering the front gate was Amasa Bradshaw!

"This is very peculiar," said the editor, frowning darkly as he faced the astonished Mills.

"We were locked out, you know," faltered the latter in dismay.

"Why, Elfrida," exclaimed Bradshaw, with surprise in his voice, "I gave you the key just before I left for East Coponsett."

"How odd that I should forget it!" murmured Elfrida agitatedly.

"Yes, she must have forgotten it, you know," added Mills, more and more alarmed at the sudden turn of affairs.

"I—I saw you. And I thought I could trust you," sighed the editor bitterly, and stood with bowed head.

"You can; you must. There is nothing out of the way, I assure you," cried Mills.

"I cannot fail to accept the evidence of my own eyes," said Bradshaw sternly with a choke in his voice, and looking

at his wife with a wounded fawn expression in his mournful eyes. Then he frowned and appeared to restrain himself with difficulty.

"Protect me, Mr. Mills; save me!" exclaimed Elfrida, clinging to his arm with melodramatic appeal.

"Don't be ridiculous, madam," said the attorney.

"My husband does not understand; you must explain things to him," persisted Elfrida.

"Why, we were locked out—"

"So you said," cut in Bradshaw pointedly.

"And she had just promised me her assistance, and I was thanking her."

"As I happened to observe."

"How stern he looks!" cried Elfrida. "Can't you say something that will mollify him, Mr. Mills?" and she buried her face in her handkerchief. Then she sank into a chair, her shoulders shaking convulsively with laughter, which grew shrill to the point of hysterics, while her husband burst into loud guffaws, unable to contain himself any longer.

"What does this mean?" asked Mills in bewilderment.

"It means," gasped Elfrida, "that our brilliant and astute Uncle Fred has met his match for once!"

"She has you there, old fellow," laughed Bradshaw. "She has made us both dance to the piper and played us against each other. But I'm glad it's over. I wasn't cut out for an actor. She plotted all this against you, and blackmailed me to keep silence until the game was over. I guess she's got even at last!"

XVII

MILLS passed a restless night. On the whole he didn't cut a very heroic figure in his own estimation, and the worst was yet to come, unless it could be managed that the papers now in possession of Arthur Peacock could be transferred to Bradshaw, as Elfrida had suggested. At all hazards, he felt he must venture an early morning call on the Coopers and beard his rival.

After an early breakfast he started,

and just before reaching the top of the hill had the good fortune to fall in with Arthur Peacock, hurrying toward the village at a rapid gait, wearing a determined expression and evidently bent on prompt and drastic action.

"Hello there! Where are you going, Arthur?" greeted Mills with unusual cordiality.

"Oh, just strolling along, taking in the ozone," replied Peacock with a mysterious air.

"Going sailing this morning?"

"Oh, no; not as early as this, anyhow; Miss Lester isn't ready yet."

"Hope you didn't catch cold the other day," remarked Mills, with a sympathy that was not appreciated.

"Oh, I'm in fine fettle; never felt better in my life," assured Peacock.

"A plunge in the briny does us all good now and then, doesn't it?"

"You needn't be so sarcastic."

"Sarcasm! My dear fellow, I assure you it was furthest from my thoughts."

"I say, Mills, what are you up to, anyhow?" cried Peacock, unable to restrain himself any longer. "Do you expect to make love to all the pretty women in Coponsett County at once? I caution you that you are going too far, and have reached the end of your rope at last."

Mills saw that his rival was preparing to spring his *coup* with melodramatic flourish, and resolved to carry the war into Africa. "See here, young man," he said, "I am aware that you have certain letters of mine in your possession."

"So you acknowledge their authorship? I didn't think you'd dare," sneered Peacock.

"Certainly, they are mine; hand them over, if you please," and Mills extended his palm with a commanding gesture.

"Oh, you can't bullyrag or bluff me," said Peacock with rising spleen. "I am going to teach you a much needed lesson. These letters are to be placed in the hands of Amasa Bradshaw at once. Your friend, your host, the man whose confidence you have abused, whose trust you have betrayed, will know how to deal with you. Coponsett will be a little too sultry for you, I fancy."

"Oh, but you wouldn't really do anything like that!" protested Mills in affected alarm, delighted to find his work half done for him.

"I am going to do my duty, no matter what the consequences," declared Peacock grimly.

"You are quite determined to ruin me, I see," said Mills in a tone of well simulated dejection.

"I'm sorry for you, Mills, in a way, though I abominate your practices. I'm not actuated by any mean spirit; as a matter of fact I've a most generous nature," he added. "When I said I was going to see Bradshaw immediately I meant it. However, if it's a matter of reasonable time—you want to get out—"

Mills cursed his luck mentally; but he knew he must appear to avail himself of Peacock's ill timed "generous" impulse or he would give the whole show away.

"Well, you see, I can't run away and leave all my belongings behind me; and my trunk's full of scandal. And there's my office—"

"How much time do you want?" Peacock quite believed the hint of the scandalous trunk.

"This business is rather sudden," urged the arch-villain. "I want time to allege plausible excuses, to say goodbye to my friends here, to your uncle and your mother and to Mrs. Jones and Miss Lester."

"Oh, cut out Miss Lester; I won't stand for that," threatened Peacock with a swagger.

"All right," acceded Mills, "but I'm bound to tell her aunt, because of business affairs. How long will you give me?"

Arthur Peacock reflected. "I'll give you just twenty-four hours," he said after some hesitation, "to get out of Coponsett. Before this time tomorrow morning—that's the very most I'm willing to concede. By this same hour tomorrow these letters," tapping his pocket, "go to Amasa Bradshaw!"

Mills with difficulty restrained an impulse to violent laughter. He had not brought things off quite as "pat" as

he had hoped. He would have preferred to see Peacock hurrying there and then on his vengeful way to Coponsett Village.

However, there seemed no doubt he would surely effect the *coup* tomorrow, and in the meantime he must try to plan things so that no transfer of the letters to Miss Lester should take place. There was no knowing what Peacock might do in that direction on a sudden impulse.

"I suppose you have no objection to my hunting up Mrs. Jones?" Mills asked.

"I'll hunt her up with you," replied Peacock firmly; and so, having agreed upon an armed truce, the two young men walked back toward the Jones and Cooper establishments.

XVIII

How much more of this sort of thing either could have endured without a breach of neutrality is problematical. Their philosophical diplomacy was suddenly relieved from further test.

"Hello! What's doing back there?" exclaimed Mills.

On one side of the stable yard wall were Cooper and his choreboys, peering over it into the adjoining garden, where Mrs. Longacre Jones and her *entourage* were engaged in chasing a piebald horse. Cooper was convulsed with laughter.

"Come here quick," called Jonas Cooper as they approached. "Just watch Silas, now; he's cut out for a ring-master."

Silas Warren had started in hot pursuit, armed with whip and halter, scolding away in his Yankee jargon: "Hi there, you pestiferous critter, you! Get out of this, you consarned skedaddler; hi, hi, hi, gorraye!"

He succeeded in scaring the horse into the grape arbor. She liked grapevines. There wasn't much left of that arbor when she got through with it. Plunging into the open once more, Mehitabel skipped with a pretty sidestep to the other end of the garden, where she indulged in a roll on the geranium beds.

Mrs. Jones now began to tell her help what she thought of them. "A more useless lot of idiots no woman was ever cursed with," she bewailed. "Now, you, Silas, just keep away from the horse with that whip and halter. The idea of running after such an animal with a whip in your hand and thinking you had a chance to catch it!"

"I wanted to have the whip handy when I did catch the beast," muttered Silas vengefully.

"What you don't know about horses and sailboats and skylights and hen traps and a few other things would fill a book," said his wrathful mistress. "Now if you will keep still a few minutes and watch me I'll show what a woman can do. Just get me a feed of oats, that's all I ask of you."

Silas obeyed in silence. Quite unaware of the audience on the other side of the wall, the good dame now took the measure of oats and crept slowly, softly toward the sportive Mehitabel, who was munching choice white clover blossoms and switching flies with her long white tail. Then Mrs. Longacre Jones addressed the circus pony somewhat after this fashion: "Did they chase him and scare him and bother him half to death? Well, they shouldn't; he was a good horse, a nice horse, a kind horse, a sweet horse, so he was."

"It's a mare, ma'am," objected Silas Warren in a stage whisper.

"Be quiet, you!" commanded Mrs. Jones out of the corner of her mouth and with a gesture of disapprobation. "So he was a mare, a sweet little mare, too," she purred as she sidled toward Mehitabel, with her eyes fixed longingly on the pony's tassellated forelock that hung over her brown eye coquettishly.

"Does he want some nice oats now? So he does!" urged Mrs. Jones.

"If she would only stop calling that piebald mare 'he' she might have a chance to catch the critter," confided Silas to Miss Lester.

"She can't do much worse than you did, Silas," retorted the young lady with a glance of reproach.

"So he should have oats, all he wants of them," continued Mrs. Jones with

vain repetition as she made a sudden clutch for Mehitabel's forelock.

Mehitabel swished her tail, pranced on her hind legs, pawed the air and then bounced around the ten-acre lot, knocking Silas Warren's patent ash barrels galley west in transit, and brought up once more at the clover patch, where she resumed feeding as calmly as ever.

"You never can do anything with oats; I told you so," cried Miss Lester. "It's a pet horse and is waiting for her sugar. I'll catch her with nothing but a lump of sugar; see me do it!"

"You won't get her that way in a thousand years," broke in Silas Warren. "I'll get a lasso and land her, if you'll just keep her quiet a few minutes." Wherewith he disappeared temporarily from the scene of action.

Miss Lester approached the horse in a careless, offhand way, giving an excellent imitation of Mehitabel's own graceful *nonchalance*.

She tasted the sugar and smacked her lips in tantalizing fashion. "It's good, just 'licious," she assured Mehitabel. "Don't you want some now, horsey, dear horsey? I'm sure you do. Just come and taste it before I eat it all."

Mehitabel said she was much obliged, but she really preferred clover.

"Come, come; please do come, that's a nice pony; come to your mother."

Mehitabel refused to acknowledge the spurious relationship.

"I know you want sugar, sweet, sweet sugar," cooed Miss Lester, as she glided across the intervening yards of clover and made a grab.

Mehitabel, the unfeeling, once more waltzed on her hind legs, switched the fair deceiver smartly in the face with her tail and took another constitutional around the lot.

"Oh, dear, that horrid horse!" The words seemed mild enough, but Miss Lester spoke them with intense emotion.

But this was too much for the susceptible Mills, who now scrambled over the wall, Peacock following. Jonas Cooper sneaked after, somewhat shamefaced; but one look at the wrathful countenance of Mrs. Longacre Jones

was enough to quiet his conscience and make him feel chipper for a week.

"We'll catch her for you," he volunteered, with an obvious effort to repress his risibility.

"I shall be under great obligations to you, Mr. Cooper," responded the Lady of the Manor scathingly, but somewhat taken aback by her enemy's sudden appearance.

Cooper set about the task patiently, conscious that his reputation was at stake; and he might have succeeded shortly had it not been for Silas Warren, who now appeared on the scene with a long rope, which he had looped at one end into a slipnoose.

"It's a lariat," he whispered to Mills. "Don't say anything. That horse is a devil; she understands every word that is spoken. Just hold still and watch me."

With bated breath he stole up on one side of Mehitabel, while Jonas Cooper, unaware of these tactics, approached her from the other. Silas threw his lasso with consummate skill, then turned and started on a run with the rope end over his shoulder.

The young men stopped him before he had dragged Jonas Cooper for more than a rod. In one instant Mehitabel had ducked, Jonas Cooper had made his dive for her forelock, and the noose had fallen neatly over his shoulders. Silas had landed Mehitabel's owner with his device if it hadn't caught Mehitabel—dragged him on all fours clean through a rose bush at that.

"I vum," apologized Silas, as Cooper rose from his blistering experience, "I do vum, sir, I thought I had caught your horse that time sure."

Then they all took a hand at it. A line was formed round Mehitabel, driving her toward the wall over which she had come. By dint of united efforts she was finally cornered against it, and jumped it with the grace of a greyhound. Then she wandered of her own accord into her stable. It was time for her lunch.

Mills spent half an hour trying to persuade Mrs. Jones to raise her wall high enough to keep out Mehitabel in

future, and to call off the row; but she was adamant in her determination to go to law about the matter, and directed him to prepare an inventory of the damages and subpoena all the spectators of the fracas as witnesses. Not even the diplomacy of Fred Mills could prevail; but then he was opposing the will of the stronger sex on this occasion.

XIX

"WILL you go for a walk with me this afternoon?" Peacock asked Miss Lester. "I want to talk with you about something very important."

"I have an engagement with Mr. Mills this afternoon."

"If I were a gambling man I should bet he won't keep his appointment."

"Why?"

"For one reason, because Lady Southdown has finally left her husband and gone back to her mother." He threw in this out of pure malice, without a notion of the poisonous nature of his barbed arrow.

"Really?" she said, turning pale.

"Read the papers. As soon as Mills hears of it he will drop everything to flutter round his old flame; that's the way with fellows of his sort. Besides it's getting too hot for Mills here; Bradshaw's growing jealous."

"Remember what I said once before, Arthur," cried the girl, with heightened color. Arthur Peacock made no reply but went off chuckling.

"You seem annoyed," observed Mills, coming up at that moment.

Peacock turned, frowned at him, gesticulated threateningly toward the village, intimating in pantomime that Mills had better be making off in that direction.

"I really think Arthur must be going crazy," said Evelyn. "Just look at him over there making faces and gibbering at us."

"The evil spirit that possessed Mehitabel must have taken its abode elsewhere," replied Mills, laughing. "What time shall we start this afternoon?"

"Let us say four o'clock. You

needn't come way up here. I will join you where the path from Coponsett turns off toward the woods. It will be cooler by then."

After mollifying and consoling her aunt, Evelyn hunted up her wide shade-hat and her butterfly net. As she met Mills by the bridle path she called to him: "I'm going to make you work, you see."

"I'll do my best," he promised. "I'd rather find that bank whereon 'the wild thyme blows'"

"And you wouldn't follow me on Puck's steeplechase?"

"What would happen if I caught you?" he asked, with a serious tenderness in his eyes that belied his tone of banter. Was it, she wondered, just his way?

Arriving at a tree-shaded spur of rock overlooking a valley bottomed by long reaches of salt marsh grass, Evelyn swung herself into the hammock slung between two sugar maples, and Mills lolled back in the rustic seat, dividing his attention between the genius of the place and a cigarette.

"We often come here," said Evelyn. "Arthur reads well and has good taste in poetry. By the bye, what's the matter with Arthur lately? I don't know what to make of him; he's been so wild-eyed and mysterious. I fear he's coming down with some serious illness."

"He seems healthy enough."

"That reminds me; he's just told me a bit of gossip that may interest you."

"Yes?" with intense anxiety.

"He says Lady Southdown has left her husband and returned to America."

"You mustn't believe all you read in the papers," replied Mills coolly. "She returns here on business, no doubt. These international marriages all involve more or less dickerings, both before and after. Of course I know very little about the matter. I hear all this sort of thing from my aunt, Mrs. Ashton."

"Mrs. Bruce Ashton?"

"Yes; you have met her?"

"In Paris, years ago."

Mills looked absently toward a birch-crowned hill on the other side of the valley.

"Penny for your thoughts," she said. "That episode of ours in ancient Greece is pestering me again," he said soberly. "I don't think you will ever realize how very real it is to me."

"Well, why don't you unravel it? Let's try again. For instance, were we ever together in the woods like this?"

"Perhaps; though the impression today is one of lights and music, laughter and bright eyes—yes, your eyes were very bright."

He rose and came over to the hammock, swinging it gently with one hand while his eternal cigarette occupied the other. He looked down at her with puzzled gaze.

"Now you have hit something that awakens the vague memory in me again, only much less evasive than it was the day we were sailing together," responded Evelyn. "It is growing clearer to me; isn't it strange?"

"Wonderful! Come, can't you help me with new light on the subject?"

"It is getting more and more vivid," cried Evelyn. "That phrase 'lights and music,' brought a whole world of visions in its train. Yes, I can see the lights, hear the music and thread the mazes of a dance; for I am sure we danced together."

"How remarkable! That hadn't occurred to me, and yet, now that you suggest it, I remember it distinctly," and Mills began pacing up and down before her with tense excitement.

"Why, I can even taste the ice cream—strawberry and vanilla mixed." She was laughing merrily.

"They didn't have ice cream in ancient Greece. Do be serious."

"Oh, but they must have had, for I taste it—and ladyfingers, macaroons and kisses—candy kisses, of course; I taste them, too!"

Mills had resumed his seat, but he now sprang up again. "What is all this? What do you mean? By George, what an ass I am! It was Mrs. Westervelt's fancy dress party, years ago, when I took a bright child down to supper. It was the Greek costume you wore that night that impressed me so, and that scarab ring you still wear. I remember

you had it on then. That is what finally gave me the connecting link between my day dreams and the reality."

"My ring? Oh, it was my mother's. She brought it from Egypt."

"So you were the little girl in the white silk robe with your hair in a Psyche knot! I have always tried to remember what your name was."

"And you even forgot my face. To me it was such a great occasion—a schoolgirl to be taken in hand by a real, grown man of the world, think of it!"

"Why didn't you tell me before what old friends we were?" He was standing beside her again, rocking the hammock, his eyes smiling down into hers.

"Because I wanted to see if you would ever remember."

Mills watched her with eyes that spoke his love plainly enough, had she but turned to see it. Should he say the words now? He hesitated. No, he decided. There would be at present, despite the absurdity of it, something to explain concerning the silly tangle that chance had woven about him—and the explanation would give a sordid seriousness to the situation which did not properly belong to it. The letters once back in Bradshaw's hands, he would seek an answer to the only remaining question in his mind.

Perhaps it would have been happier for them both if he had been less prudent and put his fortune to the touch then and there, to "win or lose it all." Procrastination sometimes steals other things than time!

XX

SILAS WARREN was in an unhappy frame of mind. For once his reputed ingenuity had failed to respond to the call of emergency. The morning raid of Mehitabel should have been averted. The ancient enemy of the house of Jones was now in the ascendant, and his retainers jeered at Silas over the stone wall while he potted about the garden doing his best to repair damages.

Mrs. Longacre Jones viewed the general havoc with lackluster eye. "We

must do something to turn the tables on him or Jonas Cooper will never stop laughing at me," said she.

"And you don't like my idee of a barbed wire barrier on top of the wall?" drawled Silas anxiously.

"I tell you, I won't raise that wall an inch—not for Jonas Cooper nor all the king's horses," commanded his mistress. "If you are any good at all you will think up something to set us right and put the laugh on Jonas Cooper. I don't care so much about the damages, though I'll make him settle for them if I have to spend a fortune."

With the entire responsibility thus placed upon his shoulders, Silas pulled his beard and wandered about the premises, muttering to himself and revolving all sorts of wild and futile schemes in his busy brain.

At last, to judge from a sudden pause in his meanderings and a light in his eye, he had thought upon a plan of campaign. Cautiously hailing the Cooper stable boy over the wall, he said: "I've got to go downtown this afternoon, Bob; will you keep that there horse in the barn until I get back?"

Having secured a temporary respite, he drove to the village to visit his friend Samuel Whiting, who kept the general store adjoining the post office.

"How's business, Sam?" asked Silas as he entered Whiting's shop.

"Bad, Si, very bad," said Samuel. "Holiday trade gone all to smash. Here it is the afternoon of the third, and I haven't so much as sold a firecracker."

"How's that?"

"Why, the school teachers (under pressure from the School Board) have persuaded the children to vote for a 'safe and sane' Fourth."

"You don't say so?"

"It's the dead loss that hits me, Si," he bewailed. "Here I've gone and bought a big lot of skyrockets, pin-wheels, Roman candles, spittires, flower pots, cannon crackers, giant torpedoes, firecrackers and Lord knows how many caps and blank cartridges. I paid forty dollars for the outfit, and I might as well have thrown the money into the

Atlantic Ocean," sighed the tradesman dolefully.

"What would you sell the stuff for if I could find somebody to take it off your hands?" asked Silas.

"You?" asked Whiting in surprise.

"Well, Mrs. Jones has relations with big families of children round Taunton and Walpole way; maybe they ain't educated up to the sane Fourth idee."

"See here, Silas, do you really mean business? I'll sell you the stuff for thirty dollars and give you ten per cent. discount for cash—and old friendship."

"That ain't business. I'll give you twenty dollars, Sam, and call it a bargain."

"I'd rather keep my stock over until next year and take my chances of folks seeing the foolishness of the 'sane' idee."

"Well, twenty-five, then. Do up the stuff and put it in the wagon—and keep your mouth shut."

Equipped with a supply of fireworks which the prudent Sam Whiting had thought sufficient for the whole village of Coponsett, Silas now set to work.

He opened up the gaily colored tubes, and with the expert finish of an anarchist proceeded to mix them together into one terrific engine of destruction. He then stretched a very fine but strong wire, which he hoped would be invisible to his short-sighted mistress, across the top of the wall, running it at a height of two feet above, so that Mehitabel must of a necessity strike the wire when she next attempted to leap into the Jones garden. He then dug a hole on the hither side of the wall, and therein concealed his homemade mortar, covering it over carefully with grass and the shorn vines of the grape arbor.

Finally he concocted a fuse whereby any violent pressure on the wire would discharge the contraption.

"I do vum," he muttered, as he completed his nefarious task, "it'll be worth twenty-five dollars to see what happens to Mehitabel when she jumps this here wall next time."

He resolved to keep his scheme a profound secret, even from his mistress. "I must see that they don't get the law

on her, though," he reflected, and after due consideration he painted a sign with the word "Danger" in big letters and set it upon the top of the wall above the spot where he had secreted his infernal machine, with the writing facing toward the Cooper stable yard and the blank back toward the Jones premises.

XXI

It was half past ten in the morning. The truce with Mills was up, so Peacock made an excuse about going for the mail and started for the village. He wished first to satisfy himself absolutely that Mills had left town. As he had anticipated, the lawyer's office was closed, so he turned to look up Bradshaw at the *Gazette*. At this critical moment Amasa Bradshaw happened to be at the hotel consulting with its manager about some advertising. Peacock, after waiting for some time, finally decided to wait no longer, but return home and show the damning documents to Evelyn at once and have the scene over with.

Meanwhile, in the full confidence that Peacock would duly deliver the fatal letters into the custody of Bradshaw, Mills had taken a morning stroll along the shore, finally making a short cut up the bluff path to the Jones homestead. He found Evelyn in the garden, now busy in the rose arbor. She was selecting half-blown buds and clipping them with her shears.

"Good morning; we are having a veritable summer of roses and wine," said Mills as he joined her and volunteered his assistance.

"Aunt Myra doesn't believe in wine."

"But the wine I meant was the wine of life, the *joie de vivre*, that sparkles in your rose arbor this morning."

"How poetical! Or perhaps you wish to suggest that I look like a long-necked bottle with a Rhenish label!"

"Now that's naughty," said Mills, sitting down to watch her as she clipped busily at the flowers. "You twist my metaphor all out of shape. I was trying to tell you what a pretty picture you make." He was being tempted a little beyond safe grounds.

"And arouse my temperamental combativeness," she retorted, ignoring his sentiment as she clipped a rose dangerously near his ear.

"I won't allow you to ignore all my pretty speeches like that," said Mills with mock severity, taking the shears from her grasp and taking possession of her half reluctant hand. "I won't have you turn everything into ridicule."

He drew her down beside him on the bench and proceeded to scrutinize his prize. "What do you mean by spoiling this pretty little hand? Here is a scratch from a heartless thorn, and there a little rough spot from holding the tugging sheet, and here a tiny burn, for which no doubt the delicious prune soufflé was responsible. Girls with hard hands are usually the kind that have hard hearts."

"I refuse to have my palm read like that; it isn't scientific."

"The life line is long; but the heart line is very faint."

"I don't carry my heart in my palm."

"Tell me where you do keep it, then," he whispered very tenderly.

"Why—do you want to see the wheels go round?"

Their talk was light enough on both sides, but there was a mutual subconsciousness of deeper sentiment. At the sound of an approaching step, Evelyn glanced up and saw Arthur Peacock standing in the arbor entrance, his face livid and his eyes wearing an ugly look.

"Look, Mr. Mills—Arthur!" cried Evelyn incoherently, disturbed out of her usual composure and instinctively fearing a scene.

"My repeated warnings have been in vain, Fred Mills," said Peacock, his voice trembling with solemn fervor as he drew from his pocket the papers Mills confidently believed to be reposing safely in the hands of Amasa Bradshaw.

Mills turned pale. The thing he had feared had happened.

"What does all this mean?" faltered Evelyn.

"It means," said Peacock, "that I am now ready to accept your often repeated challenge and face this fellow with the proofs of his dishonorable flirtation. These papers, in his own handwriting,

addressed to his friend's wife, have been placed in my hands. I now give them to you. Look at them and judge for yourself."

"I can't understand it at all," she cried, turning very white and looking from the papers to Mills as though he had stung her.

Before Mills had time to reply, or any words had occurred to him, Mrs. Jones was heard calling loudly for assistance.

Evelyn waited only a moment for a possible explanation—which did not come—and turning her back upon the two men walked to the house dazed.

Once more Mrs. Jones appealed for help, calling out that Mehitabel had just been turned loose in the stable yard.

Mills turned with relief to this momentary distraction and hurried to the rescue, while Peacock sauntered off to his uncle's premises to ruminate upon his doubtful triumph and plot the next move in the game.

XXII

It had been a quiet Fourth indeed at Coponsett. All the morning long not a firecracker had hissed, not a torpedo exploded. The small boys sported on the sand or went to the baseball game; and the little girls played with their dolls.

But no such "sane Fourth" was ordained by Providence to be celebrated on the estate of Mrs. Longacre Jones. No more convenient interruption than the call from the Lady of the Manor, as far as Mills was concerned, could have occurred.

Arrived at the back of the house, he found its mistress and her whole bevy of indoor retainers collected, having all evidently rushed to the post of danger from a variety of household occupations.

Mrs. Jones herself had a large pair of flower shears in one hand and a bunch of long-stemmed roses in the other. Thus armed for bellicose operations, she was supported by her domestics. The cook, her arms flour-whitened, grasped a rolling pin; the other two girls were equipped with dusters, feather brushes and chair beaters. All watched, from the vicinity of the kitchen door, the antics of Mehitabel,

just let loose from her quarters for an airing in the stable yard, round which she pranced and pirouetted to the tune of the summer morning.

"What has become of that crazy Silas Warren? Why isn't he here just as I need him? Whatever shall we do without him?" Mrs. Jones was bewailing in tones of panicky agitation.

"He will doubtless turn up presently," said Mills soothingly as he came running up.

"She's coming! She's coming!" cried Mrs. Jones, as Mehitabel peered over the wall toward the tempting clover patch and pranced to a position whence she could easily make the leap she was so evidently contemplating.

"Shoo, shoo, Mehitabel!" cried Mrs. Jones, waving her shears and her bouquet.

"Shoo, shoo!" exclaimed her feminine retainers in chorus, brandishing their various arms and accoutrements.

"Can't you do something to stop her, Mr. Mills?" pleaded Mrs. Jones plaintively.

Thus exhorted, Mills ran to the wall and jumped upon it at the point where the danger sign had been erected by Silas Warren, only its unmeaning blank back visible to him.

Mills waved his arms valiantly at Mehitabel, and the horse backed away with mild-eyed astonishment.

But now a loud shout arose from the highway, whence Silas Warren was returning from some excursion or other. With horror he beheld Mills standing on the wall directly over his infernal machine, set with the anarchistic design of blowing up Mehitabel, and in dangerous proximity to the fine wire attached to the fuse.

Silas was rooted to the spot. "Hi there, look out, Mr. Mills—look out!" he bawled at the top of his lungs as soon as he could find voice.

"Come over here quick, you skulking fellow!" cried Mrs. Longacre Jones indignantly.

"You are a nice specimen of humanity, Silas," jeered Mills at the recalcitrant, laughing at himself the while and knowing what a figure he must cut.

Silas paid no heed to these derogatory comments, but continued to shout and gesticulate from the road, apparently afraid to move from where he stood.

"Look out, sir!" he again shouted in an agony of fear and alarm. "Look out, for heaven's sake! Don't you understand? You'll set off the mine, the fireworks! What'll I do to make him get away? The mine—the gunpowder!"

"The fellow's gone crazy," cried Mrs. Jones; "and I shall go mad myself if his sort of thing goes on much longer."

"What on earth are you gibbering at me about?" demanded Mills impatiently, half wondering if he was being made a fool of.

"Get off the wall; it'll explode on you, don't you see?" warned Silas once more, half frantic with terror and therefore so incoherent that he failed to make himself understood. "Can't you read? Don't you see that there sign? It's danger," he urged plaintively.

"Danger, your grandmother!" shouted the disgusted Mills, as he seized upon the sign and flung it to earth.

"I swan, was ever a man so deaf?" bewailed Silas. "Gee criminy, I'll have to do something pretty quick!" At last finding wit enough to leave his distant position, he started running down the far side of the hedge to enter the garden.

Finally absorbing the notion from these iterated warnings that there might be some lurking danger in his post of which he was unaware, Mills was about to step down from the wall when his feet became entangled in something. He gave an impatient jerk to free himself from the incumbrance; there was a snap, a hiss, a roar, and he was suddenly enveloped in a sheet of flame, a cloud of smoke and a shower of sparks.

Suddenly Mr. Frederick G. Mills, of Boston and Coponsett, ascended heavenward in a blaze of glory! No hero of romance could ask an apotheosis more splendidly melodramatic.

The noise of the explosion resounded throughout the vicinity and the audience quickly gathered about the prostrate form of the victim.

"Why wouldn't he listen to me?" be-

wailed the unfortunate Silas; but no one paid any attention to him.

Mills was torn, bleeding, unconscious, and in that condition was borne into the house, where anxious hands did all that could be done for him until medical aid arrived.

Evelyn had heard the sound of the explosion from her room, where she had gone to hide herself with her grief, and now came downstairs just as they were placing the unconscious form of Mills upon the parlor lounge.

Quickly she approached him, horror-struck. "Fred, Fred! Oh, he isn't dead, is he? What have you done to him! What have you done!"

Mrs. Jones put a comforting arm round her and led her away. "Come; it's all right, little girl; he'll be all right directly. Silas will bring the doctor at once; don't be frightened."

"Oh, auntie, auntie," she sobbed, crying softly, "you see what these wretched quarrels lead to."

"My child, it takes two to make a quarrel, and it's the last time I shall play any part in it, I warrant you."

In due course the village physician arrived and made his preliminary examination of the patient.

"Oh, he will live all right," pronounced the physician; "but I very much fear the poor fellow may lose his eyes."

Upon this suggestion a specialist was summoned by wire from Boston.

He arrived that same afternoon, bringing with him a competent trained nurse. He said that Mills might be removed to a hospital in the course of a few days.

"I'll turn this house into a hospital for all time to come rather than allow that," said Mrs. Longacre Jones with something of her old spirit of pugnacity.

XXIII

WHEN the first excitement of the accident had passed, Evelyn Lester repaired to the veranda to try to realize what had happened to her as well as to the man who was the actual physical sufferer in the general *mêlée*.

So she sat with white, strained face, now rocking back and forth vigorously, now checking the nervous momentum to a forced stillness, as she passed in mental review all that had occurred since Mills arrived at Coponsett. She recalled how she felt when she first saw him at his office; how she had reasserted to herself the dictum that her girlish infatuation for the fairy prince of her fancy was quite subdued into a feeling of sisterly solicitude.

She now saw clearly enough that it was for Peacock and not Mills that her feelings had been of a distinctly sisterly quality; and that it was due to these same innocent quibblings that she had set herself the task of giving womanly sympathy and platonic consolation to the disappointed and jilted ex-fiancé of Alma Phillips. Until latterly their intercourse had been clouded on her side with the suspicions implanted in her mind by Arthur Peacock concerning Mrs. Bradshaw, culminating in the production of the poem and letter in Mills's own handwriting.

As she passed all this in review there on the veranda, with the thought of the awful future that now threatened the man she loved, heartless flirt though he appeared to be, the front gate opened and Elfrida Bradshaw walked slowly toward her up the path.

So this was the woman, with her amiable, doll-like face and mischievous brown eyes! And Evelyn fixed upon her a penetrating glance.

"I am sure you will excuse me for intruding upon you, Miss Lester," said the newcomer. "I am Mrs. Bradshaw. I have only just heard the news of my friend Mr. Mills's accident. Oh, I do hope it isn't as bad as rumor in the village has made it!" She was obviously deeply agitated, acutely anxious.

Evelyn Lester rose and bowed coldly. "I will tell my aunt that you are here, Mrs. Bradshaw. She will be able to give you the doctor's report more fully. Won't you sit down?"

As Miss Lester passed into the house through the screen door Elfrida Bradshaw gazed after her with a sudden realization of the probable cause of this icy reception.

She knew that her husband had not seen Peacock that morning. He had told her so at lunch. Mills's fear of those silly papers getting into the wrong hands flashed into her mind. Indeed, at such a juncture only one explanation could account for Miss Lester's manner, unless the girl were far more heartless and unfeeling than she believed her to be.

"Arthur Peacock must be at the bottom of this business," she muttered to herself. "Atrocious little nuisance! How can I put it straight? I must do it somehow. Talk of the devil and his imps will appear!" she gasped half audibly.

These words were inspired by the sudden appearance of Arthur Peacock himself, who now stood before her rooted to the top step of the veranda and glaring at her in terrified dismay.

"Er—er—Elfrida," he stammered; "what on earth are you doing here?"

"You—you wretched little beast! How dared you?" hissed Elfrida.

It was not alone this unfriendly greeting that prompted the hasty retreat of the redoubtable Arthur, who now plunged down the veranda steps through the lilac hedge and back to his uncle's like a scared rabbit.

Through the screen door he had caught sight of Evelyn Lester, her hand upon the latch, with speechless astonishment written across her pale face, as she beheld this interchange of familiar compliments between two people she supposed were at most no more than casually acquainted.

Evelyn now reappeared upon the veranda to explain that her aunt must excuse herself on the plea of sickroom duties.

"Of course, of course," responded Mrs. Bradshaw; "but won't you tell me all you can yourself?"

"I'm afraid Dr. Maltby has but little hope of the recovery of his eyesight," replied Miss Lester. "There is to be another consultation with the specialist this evening, however. In the fall one of his wrists was broken; but for the rest I understand that it is a matter of cuts and bruises."

"Do you think that it would be possible for me to see him—just for a moment?" asked Elfrida anxiously.

"Indeed, no, it would be impossible," replied Miss Lester. "Mr. Mills has not yet regained consciousness. I will see that you—and Mr. Bradshaw—are informed of the specialist's bulletin this evening."

"Miss Lester, excuse me; I am not trying to obtrude myself, I assure you; but under the terrible circumstances of this accident I feel there is something I must say to you—explain. You will understand my anxiety—"

"I fancy, Mrs. Bradshaw, that I am already aware of what you wish to confide in me. Excuse me if I say that it is a subject too painful for me to discuss."

"Oh, but you misunderstand me, I am sure. Indeed, Miss Lester, it concerns me far less than yourself." She hurried on to a somewhat blurred and not all together reassuring *apologia*, intended to be in extenuation of Fred Mills, and wound up breathless, realizing that she had not the least succeeded in impressing the girl before her with what she had intended to convey. Evelyn's face had gradually changed from an expression of impassive coldness to one of positive repulsion.

"I thank you, Mrs. Bradshaw, for letting me into your confidence," she said. "Perhaps I ought, in fairness, to add that Mr. Peacock has already intimated what you have just tried to tell me."

"Yes; I could see that he has done so and of course, he had a motive for putting the worst possible light on it. I had no idea that he would stoop to use the papers to prejudice you against Mr. Mills, whose only fault has been that of true friendship."

XXIV

FRED MILLS lay in a darkened room still unconscious, tossing impatiently and muttering in rambling fashion. Miss Brown, the nurse, was one of those colorless, helpful people who had ac-

quired the art of self-effacement. She listened attentively to Mills's light-headed murmurings, striving to catch the first glimmerings of returning reason.

"She's fond of clover, sweet clover," Mills was muttering; "but she needn't have spoiled the flower beds. I can scare her off if you'll let me alone. . . . Her life line was long, but her heart line I couldn't see at all. Has she one, I wonder? . . . Mehitabel's coming. Behave yourself, Mehitabel. . . . Dear girl, sweet girl, will she never understand?"

Having given the sufferer a sleeping potion, Miss Brown left him to go to the kitchen. On the way she met Miss Lester.

"How is he this morning?" asked the girl anxiously.

"Physically stronger; but he seems still quite delirious," said Miss Brown. "He rambles on about some lady he must have known. Poor fellow, it is really pitiful. Has he any relative named Mehitabel?"

"Oh, that's Mr. Cooper's horse," explained Evelyn with a sad smile.

"A horse—how strange! He talked about reading her palm."

"He was trying to catch a horse when the accident happened," said Miss Lester, restraining the questions she burned to ask.

Toward noon Mills awoke. He was quite weak, but evidently in possession of his faculties. Miss Brown explained the situation and gave him what encouragement she could without false kindness.

"Shall I be blind always?" he asked, as soon as he was conscious of the bandage over his eyes.

"The doctor has hopes; he can't tell yet."

"And am I at Mrs. Jones's house?"

"Certainly."

"How soon can I be moved?"

"You should be kept absolutely quiet for at least a fortnight."

"Oh, but I can't impose myself upon these good people for a whole fortnight," he protested.

"But they are most anxious, most sympathetic," assured the nurse.

"Oh, I must go. You must see the doctor and fix it up for me. I can't stay here; it's impossible, simply impossible."

"I'll talk about it with him when he comes," promised Miss Brown soothingly.

"Thank you," said Mills feebly, and dropped off to sleep again.

Miss Brown now made another visit to the kitchen, and was returning with a cup of broth, when she met Miss Lester again.

"You must be dreadfully tired," said the girl.

"I am, rather. I think I will go to my room and rest for a while; but he must not be left quite alone."

"Let me take your place. I can just sit in the room while he sleeps. If he wakes I won't talk to him at all—won't even let him know it isn't you."

"Thank you; you are very kind. He must keep absolutely quiet."

So Miss Lester took the nurse's place in the sick room. Soon the patient stirred and woke again, gently moving himself, trying to sit up in bed.

"I'm hungry, Miss Brown; have you a little more food for me?" asked the patient.

Evelyn silently handed him some milky concoction the nurse had indicated in case of need and watched him as he drank it.

"Do you know whether Mrs. Ashton has been told?" asked Mills. "My aunt in Boston, you know."

"I believe so," replied Evelyn in a whisper. "You mustn't talk."

"Indeed I must," insisted Mills. "I want to ask a lot of questions. I must be giving no end of trouble to the people here. I wish the doctor would get me away tomorrow."

Evelyn hadn't counted on sustaining a conversation with the patient, and noticing a small thermometer on the table, with quick wit she inserted it in the patient's mouth, effectually checking the questions he had threatened to ask her.

"Am I feverish?" he managed to mumble in spite of the impediment.

She merely readjusted the thermometer and timidly placed her fingers on his

right wrist—the left was in splints—making as though to feel his pulse.

Mills sank back upon his pillow as a result of these ministrations, and Miss Lester hoped he would drop off to sleep once more, resolving to slip out of the room and send her aunt to do relief duty.

But Mills had slept enough for one day. "How long do you think I shall be kept in bed?" he queried impatiently.

"Not long," whispered Evelyn, with an effort to simulate Miss Brown's colorless voice. "Wouldn't you like some *blanc mange*?" If she could only make him eat she thought he would be less likely to ask questions.

"*Blanc mange*?"

"Yes; your friend Mrs. Bradshaw brought you some this morning," said the veracious Miss Lester. She couldn't resist the temptation to get in that little dig. The result was unexpected.

"That stuff!" cried Mills. "Oh, please don't make me eat that! She has dosed me with that infernal *blanc mange* until the very thought of it sickens me." The ungrateful wretch! "Don't tell anyone I said so, but that woman has ruined my digestion. What with her gritty coffee, her asphalt cakes, her greasy soup and her *blanc mange*—ugh! I wish I had some of Miss Lester's prune soufflé."

Mills relapsed into a sleepy silence during which Miss Lester slipped out of the room and breathed a sigh of relief. She passed the rest of the afternoon superintending the manufacture of prune soufflé.

XXV

MRS. BRUCE ASHTON had abandoned her half-formed intention of summering at Coponsett and joined a coterie of her familiars that had clustered at Bar Harbor. Thence she started on a round of visits, intending to take in Coponsett for a day or so only, and it thus chanced that she arrived at the Coponsett House without having received the news of her nephew's misfortune.

Driving through the village, she noticed the imposing sign on the window of Mills's law office and went up, hoping to

find him there and surprise him; but it was closed, so she directed the local Jehu to drive to the Crimson Ramblers, where she received the first news of the accident.

"If his mind were more at ease he would have a better chance," said the editor's wife. "Dr. Maltby told me that there was a fair prospect of saving the poor fellow's eyesight."

"Do you mean that he is unhappy?" asked his anxious aunt.

"There has been a little misunderstanding," said Elfrida hesitatingly; but Mrs. Ashton could be very affable when she chose, and had assumed an air that distinctly invited confidences. Mrs. Bradshaw had been revolving all sorts of schemes for some effective move whereby she might clear Mills in the eyes of Miss Lester, and saw that Mrs. Ashton might undertake the role of mediator with high promise of success. "The fact is," she continued, "if Mr. Mills were less kind-hearted and loyal to his friends there wouldn't have been any trouble at all."

"That's always the way with these kind-hearted people—they do not offer themselves alone on the altar of friendship but everyone else they can manage to lay hands on and haul on the pyre," said Mrs. Ashton, as though personally abused by her nephew's "kind-heartedness."

"You see, my husband, who is the most literal of men, took some of my discontented remarks against the dullness of life here much to heart. Instead of scolding me he goes to Mr. Mills for friendly advice." And then she described the whole plot to Mrs. Ashton, with characteristic humor.

"Just like him; I knew his notions of law practice were of the vaguest sort," laughed Mrs. Ashton. Finally she decided to call at once upon Mrs. Long-acre Jones.

It was a day or so before Mills was able to see her; but she occupied her time to advantage in improving her acquaintance with Mrs. Jones and endeavoring to establish an *entente cordiale* with Miss Lester. She was much taken with the young lady, but perceived that the

situation was very delicate and difficult of approach.

It was not long before her tact and experience found response in Evelyn's sensitive anxiety, and the way thus opened, Mrs. Ashton ventured upon a review of the whole situation, hinting, not too pointedly, that her nephew had, as she gathered from his letters, recovered from his infatuation for Alma Phillips with surprising ease, leading her to the conclusion that he had found some mysterious antidote at Coponsett. "This is all the more clear to me," she added, "because he has taken no interest whatever in the return of Lady Southdown, who is visiting her people near Boston." Finally Mrs. Ashton launched into a semi-humorous account of the advice Mills had given Bradshaw, with the unlooked-for developments and complications that had ensued.

On this score Evelyn was not so easily to be satisfied. "But why couldn't he have taken others into his confidence?" she objected. "Why be silent when there was ample opportunity to explain?"

Mrs. Ashton confessed that she couldn't understand her nephew's reticence nor offer any plausible explanation for it. The scatter-brained Elfrida had quite forgotten the promise she had extracted from Mills that he would not "give away" to anyone the real origin of the trouble—her own discontent, and so had neglected to mention it. With all her good intentions, she had missed the tiny key that unlocked the whole problem.

Mrs. Ashton thought a moment. "It's merely a matter of being clever," she muttered. "A woman ought always to manage a man some way."

Evelyn smiled sympathetically. The sentiment accorded with her own view of things to a nicety.

"Why, I have it," cried Mrs. Ashton. "It's the simplest thing in the world. You have taken the nurse's place once or twice, and if he hasn't recognized the difference thus far it isn't likely that he will do so at all until the bandages are taken off. Draw him out and get him to talk of a similar situation; it's not a rare one."

"I'll try it," agreed Evelyn.

Among other things Mrs. Ashton became the mediatrix for the return of the Henry Webber documents to Mrs. Bradshaw. Assuring herself that she could now safely leave the Fates to their work, she tactfully withdrew to other spheres of usefulness, prepared to return to Coponsett in the fullness of time.

XXVI

ACTING upon Mrs. Ashton's suggestion, the fair conspirator arranged with the nurse, Miss Brown, to relieve her every afternoon in the sick room from two until four o'clock, suggesting that nothing need be said to the patient for the present about the change, on the theory that it might embarrass and excite him. Miss Brown was opposed to excitement in any form; she thought Miss Lester's suggestion most considerate, and cheerfully agreed to her part in the innocent deception.

Mills was convalescing rapidly. A week ago he had risen from his bed for the first time, and now began to spend his afternoons sitting by the window in a reclining chair, scenting the salt breeze.

"You have heard the good news?" asked the "two-to-four-o'clock" Miss Brown.

"You mean the doctor's report?"

"Yes; he says that in a week or so you can remove the bandage from your eyes and begin wearing darkened glasses."

"Of course that is delightful; but, like other things, it isn't altogether an unmixed blessing," said her patient.

"Why not?"

"I shall then lose my faithful nurse," said Mills politely. "Though to you no doubt it will be a relief to get a rest."

"Oh, I am simply devoted to my profession, Mr. Mills," quoth "Miss Brown" sententiously.

Was there a shade of pique in her voice? Mills thought so, and it directed his attention upon the voice itself; somehow it scarcely sounded like the subdued self-effacement of Miss Brown's professional tone.

"If you had remained in town you

would have missed a few weeks in this quiet, breezy place; that is my consolation," Mills continued.

"It is lovely here indeed," sighed the young lady.

"I was only just beginning to assimilate myself to the surroundings when I was blown sky high in a Fourth of July celebration. Wasn't it ludicrous, stupid?"

"Indeed, no; the stupidity was all on the side of that idiotic Silas Warren's notion of revenge—at least, so I've been told," said "Miss Brown," catching herself just in time.

"You know the details of the feud, then!" he exclaimed.

Mills had been growing more and more puzzled during the conversation. Now that he came to think of it, the voice strongly resembled Miss Lester's! It struck him that he had subconsciously noticed such a similarity upon one or two previous occasions.

"Is it possible?" he asked himself—then decided that it wasn't—then was haunted by the thought, in spite of the dictum of his reason, until he could endure the uncertainty no longer; and he meditated upon some clever way of resolving his doubts.

"If I could only manage to feel her hand," he muttered to himself, "I could find out whether she is wearing that scarab ring of Evelyn's—but I could scarcely take Miss Brown's hand, if it is Miss Brown; and to attempt it would be all the worse for me if it should turn out to be Miss Lester."

He was suddenly illumined by a brilliant idea. "Would you mind bringing me a glass of Poland water, Miss Brown?"

The nurse seemed longer finding the Poland water than was her wont—another straw! Finally she brought him a tumbler. As she handed it to him he groped about and managed deftly to pass his palm over her fingers before securing a firm hold upon the tumbler.

Yes, it was there! The scarab ring had once again served as a connecting link between a sweet day dream and a sweeter reality!

Evelyn was entirely unconscious that

she had been detected by a ruse so simple yet so effective; and Mills was careful not to betray the fact of his discovery, though his heart leaped to the hopeful significance of the gentle imposture. He wondered how long she had been substituting herself for Miss Brown. Well, here was his chance to resolve that doubt, as well as a number of others.

"By the bye," he said, "has Miss Lester gone away? Have I crowded the house and driven her out? It worries me not a little to have quartered myself upon them here for so long."

"Oh, no, she is still here; I saw her only a little while ago. She was just going out."

"Perhaps she was off for a sail with Mr. Peacock," Mills artfully suggested.

"You mean the young gentleman next door?" asked "Miss Brown" with futile caution.

"Yes; he's engaged to Miss Lester, you know."

"Indeed, he isn't; I mean, they do not behave at all as if they were. He doesn't seem like a man who would at all interest a girl like Miss Lester." Now, thought Evelyn, was her chance to draw him out as Mrs. Ashton had suggested.

"You like Miss Lester?" asked Mills.

"Fairly well; she tries to make herself useful, is quite a capable girl, in fact."

"Very domestic in her tastes, not at all literary, you mean?"

"Indeed, no; I see her reading often. I heard her say she would be glad to read to you as soon as you are well enough."

"She is very kind," said the patient.

Mills pondered. Her very presence was proof of more than mere kindness to an invalid guest. Might she not be still ready to be convinced of his innocence in the absurd complications that had assumed such apparently serious proportions?

"It's a strange world, don't you think, Miss Brown?" he queried dreamily and with apparent irrelevancy. "I mean the men and women in it. The strangest complications sometimes arise, turning an almost farcical situation into

incipient tragedy. As a lawyer I have had to hear the confidences of all sorts and conditions, you know."

"It must be a very fascinating profession," she replied, leading him on.

"It is; the difficulties of untying such knots for other people—what it must be for oneself, heaven knows—are simply maddening at times. You see, a man who feels that, where a lady's affairs are involved, he must keep silence and even submit to misconstruction, is apt to be handicapped, while the blab-tongue finds an easy way out."

"I have often heard of such situations in general; but I could never see how they worked out in actual life," she replied with evident interest.

"Oh, it's simple enough," he rejoined. "A tactless husband goads his wife to apparent rebellion, for instance. He confides his difficulties to a friend, who suggests an innocent subterfuge to open the good lady's eyes to the real state of her affections. In the course of working out the details this adopted uncle of the silly young things gets himself tangled up in a clumsy bungle, and before he realizes what has happened the mistake has turned the affair, as far as he is concerned, from farce to tragedy."

"But surely he could not be expected to sacrifice himself in that way; he might confide his difficulties to an intimate friend perhaps."

"Possibly, if it happened to be a very intimate friend and he had made no rash promises to the lady whose reputation was at stake; but in this case he had, you see."

"Yes," pondered Evelyn, "I think I can see how it might all work out. It never occurred to me quite in that light before, I must confess. Poor Uncle Fr—the er—the friend, I mean," she stammered. "It's time for your temperature, Mr. Mills," she added in great confusion, promptly inserting the convenient thermometer in his mouth.

By means of this base advantage she might prevent him from uttering his astonishment, but he could not restrain the smile that overspread his face while he shook convulsively with suppressed mirth.

As a result she fled from the room in precipitate panic, only to meet the real Miss Brown in the doorway.

"Quick," whispered Evelyn; "finish taking his temperature. He suspects—er—I'm afraid he's excited."

Mills immediately recognized the substitution of his genuine nurse, and returned to his couch for a delicious day dream.

Evelyn bent her thoughts upon the revelation Mills had made. She accused herself of hard-hearted obduracy at having refused to see long before the delicate situation in which he had been placed; and her realization of the cause of his silence—the finest sense of chivalrous obligation—swept her into a delightful reaction from the doubts that had haunted her so persistently. But she could not summon up courage to renew her afternoon ministrations. She must surely have betrayed herself. What else could his laughter mean?

As two o'clock arrived next day and the substitute nurse had put in no appearance, Mills's self-questionings quickly assumed panic proportions. "I've frightened her away, clumsy fool that I am!" he raved inwardly. "If she ever sets foot in this room again she sha'n't leave it without a 'yes' or a 'no'; this suspense is unendurable."

But Evelyn Lester was too much in doubt to venture another visit immediately. However, she reasoned, there was no one but her aunt to relieve Miss Brown, and Mrs. Jones was scarcely an amusing companion for a man like Mills; besides, Miss Brown ought to have her two hours off.

By three o'clock she was weakening visibly. The temptation to play nurse once more, even though Mills must be aware of the pious fraud, finally brought her to the sick room in her accustomed role. There was always the chance, she concluded, that he hadn't fully detected her, after all.

Dr. Maltby had just told his patient that he might remove the bandages from his eyes in a darkened room for a few minutes at a time; and as soon as Mills was aware of Evelyn's presence he

asked her to draw the curtains without. He wanted the stage set for a little scene he had devised.

"You have been very good to me, Miss Brown," he sighed. "I don't know what I shall do without you."

"Oh, you will be well soon," she consoled.

"But I shall miss you dreadfully. In fact, I can't think of letting you go. You're interested in law, you say; couldn't you come and be my stenographer or something?"

Evelyn looked at him in perplexity. Did he really quite know who she was? Was he purposely trying to tease her? It would be just like him!

She was meditating on the best way of reproving him, in the character of "Miss Brown," when the blind man seized her hand and at the same time took her breath away by whispering; "There is a scarab ring here that I have always fancied. It still reminds me of that girl I knew in the prehistoric ages. She has appeared to me in all sorts of guises—as a devotee of Isis by the dreamy waters of the mysterious Nile, as a fair Greek Hebe by the Olive groves of Mt. Olympus, at Mrs. Westervelt's fancy dress party, as a sweet and sympathetic woman at the helm of a little boat sailing the silvery seas; and now Evelyn, darling!" He slipped away the bandage from his eyes, blinking up into her face and drawing her down to him. "And now as what, dear heart?" he whispered tenderly in her ear.

She lay there, quite content, a fact which rendered categorical reply entirely unnecessary; and it was some time before the now ingrained habit of "explanations" reasserted itself.

"How long have you known?" she at last found voice to ask him.

"I was never wholly deceived, I think, though love is proverbially blind, sweet-heart."

"But, Fred, dear, do you think you ought to leave the bandage off yet?" she asked with smiling *double entendre*.

"Your face is the best cure for sore eyes, my love," said Mills. "But how could you fool a poor blind man so?"

"And to think that I shall never be

able to fool him again!" bewailed Evelyn.

XXVII

"How is the patient?" queried Jonas Cooper, who had wandered over in true neighborly fashion to inquire after Mills.

"If you'll sit down like a respectable citizen I'll tell you," retorted Mrs. Jones aggressively. Jonas obeyed meekly and took a vacant chair at her side.

"Dr. Maltby assures us that he is getting on satisfactorily, and hopes that he will be able to leave the darkened room in a week or two."

"A month tomorrow since the accident; it should be a lesson to both of us," sighed Cooper remorsefully. "When we reach the point of setting infernal machines for each other it is time to quit, Myra—Jones."

"I am glad you think so, Jonas—Cooper. I won't recriminate, or even mention Mehitabel, though her friskings are as nothing compared with Evelyn's. Such doings you never saw! Young folks weren't so foolish about each other in my day."

"You are speaking for yourself, Myra," he retorted.

"Oh, and for you, too, for that matter," she laughed. "No, we were foolish enough, in all conscience, but not as bad as this."

"She's a pretty smart girl, all the same, and not at all the flighty young thing I had always supposed her," commended Cooper.

"Oh, she's smart enough. She was growing so pale and thin that I was worried to death; but she's recovered her color and spirits wonderfully lately."

Jonas Cooper chuckled and winked slyly at Myra Jones.

"Wasn't it the queerest mix-up you ever heard of?" she laughed.

"And yet a happy ending was a sure thing between such a pair; it was destiny—and destiny's a pretty obstinate mule, Myra," responded her ancient enemy with unwonted seriousness.

"To compare it to a piebald circus pony would have been an illustration more apt; however, not to be hypercrit-

ical, I—I wish we had both recognized that fact long ago, Jonas," sighed the elderly dame with sudden softness.

"Myra," he cried, "do you mean that?" The old gentleman leaned forward and scanned her face anxiously.

"Mean what?"

"No, you don't, Myra Jones; you don't put me off again. I say it's not too late, even yet. Come now; let's settle the boundary dispute here and now and have done with it."

"How, Jonas?"

"By uniting the two estates, of course,"

"Do you mean that you want to sell out?" Her eyes twinkled with humorous humidity.

"Not at all, nor yet buy; we could never agree on the price for one thing. Now, Myra, don't perversely misunderstand me after all these years. You know what I mean, well enough; say you will marry me—there!"

"Hush, Jonas," she warned; "the maids in the kitchen might hear you."

"Oh, we will talk it over at length this evening; but I won't budge from this veranda until you say 'yes,' Myra. I've waited long enough."

"Yes, then, dear Jonas," she whispered, holding out her hand to him, over which he bent with grave courtesy. "And, Jonas," she added with a familiar twinkle, "you owe me five dollars and a half for the wire fence Silas put up on the wall to keep out Mehitabel."

"Oh, excuse me!" said a pert young voice at the door.

"Come here, you silly child," called Mrs. Jones as Evelyn beat a mock retreat. No further words of explanation were needed; the old lady's glistening eyes and smiling face and Jonas Cooper's look of proprietary pride told all.

"Oh, Aunt Myra and Uncle Jonas, I'm so glad; I've just longed for this!"

"Thank you, Evelyn," said her newfound uncle gravely; "and I want you, as a favor to me, to give that foolish young man Arthur a word or two of—well, of consolation before he starts off this evening. He'll be away for six or eight months bug hunting on the Amazon. He badly wants to see you, I

know, and dares not show up. Shall I tell him you'll deign—"

"Oh, Uncle Jonas, how can you ask it like that? Do you think in the midst of all this happiness of mine—not a cloud on my whole summer sky—I could feel anything but kindness toward Arthur? I am going to water our vines this evening. Ask him to come over and help me just as he used to."

XXVIII

THE convalescent "Uncle of Coponsett" found it impossible to reacquire his tone of detached philanthropic lassitude. "It must have gone up in smoke on the Fourth of July, while the rest of me gravitated back to this mundane planet," he confided to Evelyn.

"In that case I shall have to get acquainted with you all over again."

"Nothing of the sort, dear. You've given me new impulse, and its first manifestation is a reckless longing to hop the conjugal twig at the earliest possible moment."

"It's horrid to speak of marriage that way, as though it were an acrobatic performance."

"It is often, but not in our case, dearie. Dr. Maltby says I must go abroad for my health, and my little bride must go with me."

"Really, is it as bad as that?" she asked in quick alarm.

"Nothing else will do the business," replied Mills with a hollow cough.

"Please don't frighten me like that; I thought you really meant it."

"I do."

"Then cough like this," and she gave a much better imitation of irritable bronchials.

"Therefore I've engaged passage for Cherbourg for 'Mr. and Mrs. Frederick G. Mills.' Here are the tickets. We sail August twentieth."

Evelyn looked, blushed and believed.

"How dared you take things so for granted?" she protested. "Haven't I anything to say about it?"

"Not much, save to name the day and name it early enough."

"You are very presuming."

"Granted."

"But it wouldn't be economical to forfeit the tickets."

So they were married in the old-fashioned square parlor of the Jones homestead, quite informally, though Coponsett House was thronged with guests who came down from Boston, including a score of Lobster Pot men.

The wedding presents poured in thick and fast. Many of them were splendid; more were unique. Mrs. Ashton gave Mills a substantial cheque and some excellent advice and Evelyn a silver-mounted riding whip wherewith to keep her husband in order.

Mrs. Jones offered them a deed of the bluff property, including the Vikings' Fort; their bungalow was to be planned to include the ruins in the grounds. "Such a pleasant spot to sit on summer evenings," remarked Evelyn.

Amasa Bradshaw sent, in a handsome frame, the original copy of an unfinished sonnet, a fragment of the work of that celebrated poet, Henry Webber, beginning with those immortal lines:

Queen of my heart, thine eyes are passing tender;
I see their glory in yon distant star!

Elfrida reminded Mills that he would no longer be regaled from her cuisine by presenting him a calf-bound edition of "Paradise Lost"; and to Evelyn she gave a copy of "How to be Happy Though Married." They had come to be the best of friends.

Not to be outdone, Arthur Peacock gave Mills a little gold butterfly tie pin, writing: "You caught the prize of my collection this summer, old man, but wait until you see what I bring back from Brazil." To Evelyn he sent a jeweled butterfly, while his uncle presented the couple a pair of Mehitabel's shoes, silvered, as good luck paperweights.

Poor Silas Warren, who had never quite forgiven himself for his part in the calamity—though no one else thought of holding him responsible—had a hard time to select something. He finally determined to consult them about it.

"I vum," he said, "I have been up a stump what to give you. I've got that

there new carpet sweeper down pretty fine; though it do take a nip out of the nap sometimes, if it isn't kept well oiled."

"Oh, we must have the carpet sweeper by all means," applauded Evelyn.

"And I've just turned out a double-barreled rifle that won't kick, if you hold it right, Mr. Mills," he added, with tentative anxiety.

Mills approved, and solemnly promised to handle the weapon with due care, much to the delight of its inventor.

As Elfrida Bradshaw and her husband strolled home from the wedding, the latter asked his wife if she would really like to make a long visit in town the coming winter.

"No, my dear," said Elfrida; "there is a young gentleman coming to board here who will take all my time."

"I haven't heard of it."

"Oh, but you will, soon enough, and you will be terribly jealous—for he may

cut you out altogether," warned the frisky Elfrida.

"Nonsense; you can't frighten me any more that way, after what went on this summer."

"Oh, but that isn't a circumstance to what will go on this winter."

"Who is the fellow, anyhow?"

"Oh, you will see; just wait. He will look more or less like you, Amasa. He will have your fine forehead and your straight black hair, and his nose will be like yours, so well developed and opinionative, and his mouth like yours, too, so large and firm. And his eyes Amasa—they will be like yours, too, so big and gray and solemn—yes, and so clean—oh, so clean and steady and true!"

"What in the world are you talking about, Elfrida?"

"Silly, can't you guess?"

Suddenly the light of happy understanding shone from his eyes, as he looked into hers, and he took her in his arms and kissed her, within the sheltering shade of the Crimson Ramblers.



NATURE IN TOWN

By Louis How

YOU cannot drive out Nature from the street
 With all your steel and bricks. The sunlight falls
 As amply on the office building's walls
 As on the sea beach; and the snow and sleet
 Are just as chilly. Breezes blow as fleet
 And take the corners with the same shrill calls
 In these as in Nevada's cañons. Squalls
 Of dust go whirling merrily; you may greet
 The fruit of their wild wantoning—this stalk
 Which holds aloft its frail and striped blooms
 Behind a long deserted area's bars.
 We are too dull with our progressive talk
 To scent the ocean breezes in our rooms,
 Or, issuing from the subway, see the stars.

HIS LOST BOHEMIA

By F. Berkeley Smith

THE engines of the *Noordam* stopped—the big ship lay in a wet golden mist off Boulogne waiting for the Company's tender. Head seas from Sandy Hook to the Lizard, a nasty voyage—but today all France was in a good humor under the warmth and sparkle of a June sun.

The Enthusiast, too, was happy, for in half an hour he was climbing over an assortment of other people's trunks on the wharf at Boulogne in search of his own, a bicycle in a crate and a paint-stained sketching trap and easel. He had just sighted his squat sole leather chest when his steward handed him a telegram.

The Enthusiast ripped open the blue slip and read:

The gang send greetings. Welcome back to the Quarter. Come to the Café du Dome.

JACK.

It seemed too good to be true—his exile of five years was ended. He was on his way back to the Latin Quarter to stay. Now that he realized it he began to feel like a man who has had a Turkish bath and has just inherited a million.

He read and reread Jack's welcome over and over again as the steamer express rocked on its way up to Paris. He could see in his mind's eye that happy-go-lucky crowd of painters waiting to greet him in their favorite corner of the Café du Dome, a corner flanked by worn leather-covered settees under a smoke-stained ceiling. Accompanying the settees were three marble-topped tables so near the faded billiard cushions that you ducked your head when a fellow drew his cue.

The Enthusiast snapped out his

watch as the express rolled on. They were there at the Dome now, all of them, he mused—Jack and Billy, little Tomlinson and Jimmy—Céleste, too, with her merry eyes, and serious little Marguerite, Vinet's model, who lived in a garret room under a forgotten gable up the Rue Odessa—Marguerite who lived as modestly as a dove and as economically as a wren—Marguerite with her *retroussé* nose and the dignity of a marquise.

The steamer express seemed to drag on to Bohemia despite her average of sixty miles an hour.

At Amiens the great engine rested, breathing heavily to gain her second wind.

Seven minutes! It was irritating when Paradise lay so near.

"*En voiture!*" at last bellowed the red-faced *chef de gare*, frantic with importance.

"Baah!" bleated the toy horn of the engineer. Again they were off, rocking on light ballast through sunny France—again the roar of wheels and the fresh green country slipping past—and then all at once, shimmering ahead, fine as a cobweb, the Eiffel Tower rose slowly up from the horizon, like a phantom arrow marking the chosen spot on earth.

The city of *liberté, égalité, fraternité!* Half an hour later, at the Gare du Nord, a soldierly custom official touched his hat in response to the Enthusiast's salute.

"*Pas de cigarettes, de liqueurs, cigares?*" questioned the one in brass buttons.

"Nothing, monsieur," replied the Enthusiast merrily. "I am a painter."

Three dashes of chalk, another salute—this time accompanied with a grin—

and the Enthusiast hurried after the heels of the stocky porter bearing his possessions clear of the law toward an apoplectic *cocher* with a varnished hat and a caved-in horse.

Paris at last! The Enthusiast half closed his eyes and drew a deep breath.

"The same delicious old Paris!" he murmured. The very air redolent with asphalt made his blood tingle. As the *taximètre* clicked on past each familiar corner and café, all were as unchanged as the day he had left them.

Ah, the charm of this magic city compared to the one he had left ten days ago! Hard commercial New York, and as a final touch—Hoboken!

"Who made Hoboken, anyway?" muttered the Enthusiast as the caved-in steed jogged over the Pont Neuf on her way to the Quartier Latin.

It was twilight, and the Seine swept beneath the famous bridge in a flood of gold. Furrowing their way to Suresnes and beyond darted the swift little steamers, their lights brilliant as emeralds and rubies.

"Take the Rue de Seine," shouted the Enthusiast to the one in the varnished hat.

"*Bien, monsieur. Hue, Cocotte!*" chirped the apoplectic one, his whip cracking like a pack of firecrackers as Cocotte click-clocked into the narrow, oozy street up past its forgotten passages and time-blackened doorways leading to hidden courtyards. On past the stuffy wine shop of Mère Boileau, past the dingy *hôtels meublés* where one's key, mail and candlestick, share the same box. Past the red-grilled butcher's shop announcing mule of the first quality. Past weebegone little windows choked with an unlimited supply of Louis XVI furniture—past all these until Cocotte crossed the broad aristocratic Boulevard St. Germain, climbed the little hill to the Senate, skirted the cool gardens of the Luxembourg and went loping up the cobbled Rue Vavin toward the Café du Dome.

The Enthusiast suddenly started as he glanced up the street.

"Shades of Mürger and Paul Verlaine!" he exclaimed. He was on his

feet in the *fiacre* now gazing in astonishment about him.

Could this be the Rue Vavin—the byway of his youth? Was this the heart of the Latin Quarter? Or had the one in the varnished hat lost his way?

Two scarlet automobiles now growled their right of road, bringing Cocotte to a halt against a corner upon which stood a horror of a modern apartment house boasting of steam heat, electric light, and a lift.

Where was Père Binet's? And Billy's old studio? And the vine-covered courtyard with the gray cat at Number 64?

Gone—all gone to make room for a new street.

The Enthusiast caught sight of the new highway in question as he rattled on over the cobbles. It lay before him like an open wound, heaped with the rubbish of excavations and the débris of demolished walls under which workmen were burrowing a new branch of the "Metropolitain."

Among the whiz and clang of electric tramcars Cocotte turned into the Boulevard du Montparnasse.

Deafening loads of iron on their way to some new building thundered past. A grocer's shop on the corner announced the most popular brands of Scotch whiskey and the latest success in "fifty-seven varieties."

"Ask the man," ran a sign that paled and blossomed into an Indiana girl in perfect health eating a popular brand of cracker as Cocotte passed. Griddle cake flour, strength food and Boston baked beans vied in the window of the grocery with spicy sausages from Arles, *fromages à la crème* and the cheapest vintages from Touraine. The Enthusiast was talking to himself now, his chin buried in his hands; what he said is unprintable in light literature.

Suddenly the apoplectic one drew rein. Cocotte stopped with a jolt and the Enthusiast looked up. It was the Café du Dome.

Around a table back of the shrubbery on the sidewalk were the old crowd. As they caught sight of the arrival a yell went up, and a broad-shouldered, hatless young man rushed out from the

group. He wore a white waistcoat and patent leather shoes. He stood ringing the Enthusiast's hand now in a hearty American grip; occasionally he pounded the Enthusiast on the back. It was Jack.

And now the old crowd were at the curbstone whooping up a welcome for the exile, who was vainly trying to weed out three silver American quarters from his French change.

The apoplectic one in charge of Cocotte was now radiant and florid.

They were monsieur's old friends, that he saw, he explained, the instant he had drawn rein on Cocotte. Had not he and Cocotte had a bad day, he would not take a cent from monsieur, he declared.

He participated with the rest in the Enthusiast's welcome as heartily as his rotundity would admit, and was straightway rushed with the new arrival to the table back of the shrubbery and given a stiff absinthe in exchange for his geniality. They would have carried in the *fiacre* and Cocotte had not that patient little beast stiffened on her tired legs and refused to budge.

As for the Enthusiast, he sat in the chair that faithful *garçon de café* Eugène had passed over the heads of the group to him—sat there in a daze, gazing at the old crowd.

He studied in wonder Tommy's freshly valeted suit of London flannels, followed with a disappointed eye the smart cut of Billy's generous suit of gray tweed, noted the silk socks of little Tomlinson, marveled at the immaculateness of Jimmy, who, when he last had seen him, wore a flannel shirt and a pair of old corduroy trousers smeared here and there with the scrapings of his palette. Even that clever sculptor Wainwright, who used to boast of never owning a dress suit to escape the trouble of putting one on, now had an air about him of a retired stockbroker. Yet all these good fellows were Bohemians and had lived in the Quarter for years. "You're a sight!" cried the Enthusiast, suddenly pulling himself together. "Might I be so indiscreet as to ask if there has been a wedding, or a distribution of prizes?"

"Neither, my boy," returned Jack with a conscious grin. "Too many glad rags for the Dome, I suppose, eh? Is that it, you old Indian?"

"I tell you, Enthusiast, the Quarter has changed," added Jimmy, as he tucked his clean shaven double chin in his collar and squinted with a priestly smile through his spectacles while he dripped the contents of a frozen carafe through a lump of sugar on a perforated spoon.

"I suppose," continued Jimmy, "the girl from Muskegon and the paint hen from Elmira expect to find here all they've read about in a bad translation of the 'Vie de Bohème.' Well, they won't. All tommyrot, old man; I tell you, the Quarter's gone to the bow-wows."

"It's getting to be as modern as Harlem," put in little Tomlinson. "Grub and studio rents have gone up. Why, the good old studios at five hundred francs a year don't exist now, unless you're willing to live out near the fortifications among the Apaches and risk having your artistic career cut short by a footpad with a knife. You're lucky nowadays if you get a studio big enough to paint a portrait in for a thousand francs."

"I'll bet you I can find one," exclaimed the Enthusiast with conviction.

"All right," said Tomlinson. "Tramp around these diggings and find one if you can for less. You'll come back, after hunting for three weeks like a ferret, and tell me I'm right. If you don't believe me, look at the studio Ransom got up here on the Boulevard last year for five hundred francs."

Tomlinson went on: "Used to be Whistler's old school—cut up into studios now. Ransom's roof leaked in eighteen places. You could cook an egg in four minutes on his floor in summer, and a No. 2 stove eating up twelve francs of coal a week could not get it above a cold storage temperature in winter. Half the roof sailed away one night in a gale last March, and the rain did the rest before daylight. That's what Ransom got for his five hundred francs." And Tomlinson buried his aristocratic nose in a cool *demi* of beer.

The Enthusiast sat dejectedly in his chair. He was in immediate need of a studio himself.

"Tomlinson's right," cried Jack. "The Quarter has become a mercantile village. We Americans have ruined the old life. We spend a louis now where we used to spend two francs. Poker game in there every afternoon at four," he added, jerking his thumb in the direction of the smoke-stained corner within. "See that blue slip pinned over the wash basin? That's the daily bulletin from the races. Why, even the old olive man plays the races nowadays." For some moments the Enthusiast was lost in thought; then, suddenly brightening, he asked:

"Where's Du Barsac?"

"Gone over to Montmartre," said Billy, "like most of the French painters. He's got a swell studio, I believe, in the Square Vintimille, and gives teas."

The Enthusiast winced. Du Barsac giving teas! What next?

"And yet even in Montmartre," added Billy, "there's little of the old life left. Looks more like a hilly Coney Island now, full of cheap cabarets, dives and sideshows especially run for traveling Americans from the big hotels—and run, too, by as tough a lot of criminals as Paris can produce."

"Where's Marguerite?" ventured the Enthusiast after a melancholy pause.

"Gone like the rest," said little Tomlinson, coloring slightly. "She's part owner now, I'm told, of an automobile garage in Vincennes."

"And Thérèse?" timidly inquired the exile.

"Ah, Thérèse is a *propriétaire*," replied little Tomlinson.

"*Mon Dieu!* Proprietor of what?"

"Proprietor of a health food restaurant around the corner, my boy," explained Jack, whose portrait of the fair Thérèse once won a second medal.

"The place is as clean as a model dairy, and as silent and depressing as a morgue. You'll find it crowded any night with spinsters in preraphaelite gowns and spiritual girls dabbling in paint and ideas—spectacled paint hens, Russians, Poles, Scandinavians, Swedes

and long-haired freaks—all dining on 'the kind that mother used to make.'"

The Enthusiast groaned as one after another of his old friends and associations were being swept away.

Suddenly Jack rose and glanced at his watch.

"By George!" he cried. "I'm late. You'll excuse me, old man," he said laying his hand on the Enthusiast's shoulder, "but I've got to run and jump into a Tuxedo—I'm dining tonight at the Ritz with two cousins of Mrs. De Peyster's, whom I've promised to take to the Bal Bullier. Drop into the Bullier about ten and join us. The cousins are a little Bostonese, but bright and intelligent girls. If you see a dark blue automobile as long as an Erie engine hanging around outside the ball, you'll know we've arrived."

"That's it," growled Jimmy. "You needn't explain. They don't get hold of me any more. I know the kind—the American girl who wants to see the wild Latin Quarter. They expect to find it a regular comic opera. Fact! With a chorus of models and velvet-coated painters, quadrilles and red fire."

Jack reached for his hat.

"Don't forget the Bullier at ten," he said to the Enthusiast. "You'll be in time for the cakewalk. I'll see that the cousins go home early, and we can have a nightcap at the Café des Lilas."

"Good!" cried the Enthusiast, the very mention of the old Café des Lilas rousing him. "I'll be there. Don't tell me that's changed!"

"All but the trees in front," remarked Jack grimly. "The rest is rebuilt, and as modern as paint"; and he rushed off to dress.

The Enthusiast found his studio, but not at the modest rent he had expected. Tomlinson had been right. The Enthusiast had explored the Quarter for days, tramping up and down every flight of stairs whose entrance bore a sign, "*Atelier d'artiste à louer*."

It was in a clean, new building in the Rue Campagne Première that he finally settled upon a fair-sized studio provided

with a small bedroom and modern plumbing. But it cost him a thousand francs a year without its taxes.

He was at work one morning a few days later, when a rap brought him to his door—a sharp, healthy rap unlike the gentle, apologetic knock of a model looking for work.

The Enthusiast put down his brushes, went over to the barrier of his kingdom and slipped the bolt.

In the doorway stood his old pal, John Griscom.

"Johnny!" cried the exile.

"Just heard you were back," explained Griscom, and he gripped the exile by both shoulders. "You haven't changed a bit, old man!" he exclaimed heartily.

"Lord, but I'm glad to see you, Johnny!" exclaimed the exile, as Griscom sailed his black felt hat across the studio floor and stretched his long legs encased in worn corduroys on the divan.

"I've been here for days," explained the exile, "but it hasn't seemed like old times until now." His eyes were shining.

"I'm as dirty as a pig," apologized Griscom, glancing at his old clothes. "I've been working on a decoration with Courtois."

"Don't say anything about old clothes—look at these jeans of mine!" returned the Enthusiast. "Lord, but I'm glad to get back into 'em! Remember this old coat, Johnny?" he added with a reminiscent grin.

"Seems as natural as life to see you in it," Griscom said, as he bent over to strike a match on the floor. "Now that I've found you, listen; I've got a surprise for you. I'm married, old boy."

"You married! Great Scott!" cried the Enthusiast. "Johnny, you're joking. You married?"

"Fact," replied Griscom—"and to the best pal in the world. I want you to meet Mrs. Griscom. You'll like her. She's our kind of good fellow and a good Bohemian," Griscom rattled on. "She wants to meet you. Come around about five tomorrow. Sue and I are living in a little ranch over on the Boulevard Raspail." Tearing off the corner

of a discarded sketch, he scribbled the address. "Come at five and stay for grub. There'll be a few of the old crowd there, you know."

The Enthusiast needed no urging. He recalled just such good old Bohemian nights years ago—nights that paled to gray dawn in Griscom's studio in the Impasse du Maine, when every guest came with a substantial addition to the feast—Tommy with a sausage and Jimmy with three bottles of *vin blanc* taken on credit at Madame Boileau's. Good Madame Boileau—how many feasts she had contributed to!

The Enthusiast combed his hair as early as four the next afternoon, adjusted a black stock over a fresh collar, cleaned his shoes with a paint rag, brushed up the historical coat, and having donned his cleaned corduroy waistcoat, went in search of a small cheese of an unmistakable variety and a bottle of port. The port was an extravagance, but he was happy and didn't care; he was back in the Quarter to stay.

With the port under his arm and the cheese carefully stowed in his pocket next to his favorite pipe he set forth for Griscom's, glad that he was alive. The old Quarter had not changed after all, he mused.

He strode rapidly on, hardly taking his eyes from the pavement, cutting through the Rue Campagne Première into the Boulevard Raspail. He knew precisely where Johnny's ranch lay. Little Tomlinson had had a studio there once—the one over the iron forger's shop overlooking a quaint old courtyard hung with copies of old lanterns and parts of grills.

Suddenly the Enthusiast stopped. Then, as if in doubt, he fumbled between the pipe and the cheese for the scribbled address. A pretentious modern apartment house, carved and balconized and whose number corresponded to the one on the slip, now stood before him in insolent magnificence. Three automobiles and half a dozen private coupés were in line at the curb in front.

Undaunted, with a blind hope that Johnny's place was in the rear of all this modernity, he entered the porte cochère

and made his way to the *conciierge* to inquire.

The *conciierge* was an opulent rat-eyed woman in black silk dress. She eyed the Enthusiast sharply for a moment before pointing to the velvet-carpeted stairs. "Third floor to the right," she snapped, closing her door with the air of a duchess who had been disturbed by the butcher's boy.

It was the butler who opened the door, a venerable bishop in livery who relieved the Enthusiast of the port and his hat in a tapestried hall; the cheese was safe.

"Monsieur and Madame Griscom?" stammered the Enthusiast.

"Oui, monsieur," reverently replied the bishop, and he led the way toward the *salon*, whose crystal doors opened into the tapestried hall. The Enthusiast's heart seemed to have stopped beating. He swallowed with difficulty as he remembered the cheese.

He saw dimly the masses of roses and feathery palms ahead of him. Beyond them a clear soprano voice poured forth in an aria from "Romeo and Juliet." Then a burst of applause and the babble of an overcrowded musicale. The very air was oppressive, intoxicating with the mingled scent of perfumes.

Edging his way dexterously out from the *salon* through the crowd of smartly gowned women and the frock coated men came Griscom.

"Glad you're here, old chap," he said, grasping the Enthusiast's hand. "Ethel told me to bring you straight to her. Come; we'll try to squeeze our way in by the dining room. Miss de Vere has been singing. Voice like an angel's—everybody in Paris mad over her. She'll make the Opera next year." And Griscom guided the Enthusiast, flushed with embarrassment, round a picture hat and a lace gown toward a nervous little woman with an exquisite figure and deep violet eyes, who stood at the piano congratulating a fair-haired young girl whose white jeweled hands were searching through a roll of music for another song.

Mrs. Griscom turned instinctively as Griscom and the Enthusiast appeared.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said, extending her hand graciously to the Enthusiast. "John has told me all of your good old times in the Quarter. Real Bohemian times," she added with an arch little frown and an assumed naughty twinkle in her eye. "You know, I hate formality and all that—don't you? Come; I want to present you to the Comtesse de Brissac. She paints beautifully."

"Come with me," whispered John, gripping the arm of his friend. "You don't want to meet the Comtesse—she's as stupid as an owl"; and he led the Enthusiast back through the throng to his own den next the kitchen. "I've got some of the finest Kentucky Bourbon in the world," he chuckled as he closed the door.

Outside the closed doors of Griscom's den progressed Mrs. Griscom's formal musicale. Three-fourths of the men present were students of the Quarter, Americans and a scattering of Englishmen. The remainder were foreigners. Three counts, a good-for-nothing little marquis, whose monocled eye was in search of an American wife with millions, and two *blasé* young Frenchmen amused at transparent American society and who rarely if ever admit an American to their own.

Half a dozen new top hats had been added to the array in the tapestried hall since the Enthusiast had entered, for Tommy and Jack, Jimmy and little Tomlinson had arrived, bringing with them a young French surgeon and a distinguished member of the Jockey Club.

Again the host welcomed, while the Enthusiast sought an inconspicuous corner and replied to the chatter of a young *débutante* with a Doucet gown and a Western accent.

But there were other painters besides the Enthusiast told off by the clever hostess to be agreeable.

Many of these, like most artists, were not famous at repartee. They stood or sat solemnly in their frock coats and sipped the chocolate the Kentucky beauty in the picture hat was pouring. They listened at intervals to classical

music or stumbled along talking in their bad French to the foreigners present.

A vibrant little Frenchwoman was now seated at the piano. For a moment her small active hands ran over the keyboard; then she launched forth with all the furor and passion of her race in an aria from "Samson and Delilah."

"Grand, madame!" announced in stentorian tones a pompous old judge from Texas, his hand thrust between the top and second button of his Prince Albert, as the artiste left the piano and came toward the judge and his upholstered wife and their youngest daughter, a short, snub-nosed girl in blue. "You done nobly, madame," thundered the one from Texas, congratulating the little woman very much as he would have shaken the hand of a newly elected sheriff.

"Ah, non!" protested the merry little artiste. "Zat you do me zee compliment, it is what you say a pleasure, but zat I zing—*mon Dieu*, no woman can sing zat superbe aria but Blanche Raffaelli."

"Oh, we thought it was just grand," replied the judge's better half. "Our Effie, you know, is improving;" and she smiled at the snub-nosed girl in blue, who blushed as her eyes met those of the artiste.

"Why, mother, you know my voice is simply fierce. Sugar! I wish they didn't keep you so long on the same piece," pouted Effie.

"Ah, but my deah child," said the little woman, "you must have zee courage. I work five—six—seven hours many days on zee zame note."

"There you are, Puss," roared the Judge. "Madame, she ain't got grit enough, I tell her."

Mrs. Griscom's musicale was thinning out, most of the painters having slipped away to the café.

Jack had found the piano, now that the critical had gone, while Griscom, the Enthusiast, little Tomlinson and Jimmy leaned over the concert grand each with his glass and a cigarette.

"Hit out a little good old ragtime," coaxed Jimmy, and Jack sailed into:

The owl said "Who" on the huckleberry tree—

"Talk about syncopation!" chuckled little Tomlinson. "Jack, you're a wonder. Now for 'My Dusky Loo.' I'm getting warmed up."

Griscom started. Mrs. Griscom had suddenly swept into the room.

"Sh-h!" whispered Griscom to Jack. "Better cut it out, old man."

"John," said the hostess icily, "you know I won't allow ragtime. It isn't music; it's simply vulgar noise."

"I'm awfully sorry, Mrs. Griscom," apologized the amateur pianist, abruptly closing the piano. As for the Enthusiast, he was anything but happy. Griscom's dinner was at seven-thirty, and he must rush back to the studio to dress. The pipe and the cheese were now one. He thanked his stars he had not chosen Roquefort.

Yet the musicale and the formal dinner that followed were but two everyday phases of modern life in the Latin Quarter. There were simpler functions that the Enthusiast was inveigled to under the pretext of "a little spree." There were real homelike orgies, like the Sunday evenings of Tommy's maiden aunt, who believed in serving hymns with lemonade. The aunt was a tall, thin, conservative New England woman, with three nieces, one of whom attacked the violin in simple gowns.

The nieces had won the battle and were in "the whirl of Bohemia." The aunt had been brought bodily to France intact like an obelisk. Even the silver and mahogany they had known since they were plain children in Massachusetts now adorned an apartment overlooking the gardens of the Luxembourg. Yet within the home of Tommy's aunt there was nothing Parisian save the two white-capped little maids, whose language was almost unintelligible to the conservative aunt and the three nieces, who had not as yet graduated from the infant class in French.

The new home was as purely American as it had been in New England. One could hardly realize that all Paris lay just outside its dimity-curtained windows.

To these Sunday evenings drifted in now and then a few of the students to consume the angel cake of the youngest niece and turn the pages of a worn hymnal once the property of the Midvale Presbyterian Church.

They were all "my boys," the prim old lady would tell you. Her home gave them "a glimpse of their own, poor dears"—a glimpse, too, of just such another peaceful fireside at evening and one whose heart knew naught but forgiveness.

No, the American abroad does not change. He and she, having lived years in the Latin Quarter, return to their own people as thoroughly American as the day they left their own village or found their way to Bohemia freed from the inartistic strenuous life of a great Yankee city. Rarely if ever they become latinized. Rarely do they learn even to speak passable Parisian French.

To them their days in the city of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* have been but a passing show. Those Americans whose lives have broadened are in the

minority. There are thousands who never learn to sing, to draw, to paint or to sculpt beyond a mediocre point. They have, like thousands of their predecessors, rushed to the Latin Quarter, expecting to emerge bristling with talent, when the real talent, that of inborn genius, was never theirs at the outset.

The Enthusiast trudged back to his studio one evening after having partaken of the angel cake of the youngest niece and searched the pages of the Midvale hymnal.

Chilled with lemonade, he struck a match, and by its fluttering flare found his way up his studio stairs. On his door was pinned a scribbled card. It read as follows:

The Van Winthrops are giving an informal dance. Come around if you get in before twelve.

JACK.

"Damn the Van Winthrops!" said the Enthusiast as he slammed his door.



SOMETIMES

By Sadie Bowman Metcalfe

SOMETIMES I wonder if the springtime call,
That thrills and holds the saddest heart in thrall,
Thrills but that it may lure our feet again
To tread through wintry woods or scorching plain;
If all the lilting song and sheen of hope
Enchants but that, forgetful, we may grope
Again through night and storm and fevered climes,
Sometimes I wonder. Then I dream, sometimes,
They, loving, lure and vernal visions bring
Of shores where bide eternal hope and spring!

"BELIEVE ME"

By Berton Braley

"BELIEVE me—" Anne began.

"I always do," I said. "Though sometimes you tax my credulity greatly."

"That rude interruption makes it possible for me to say a very clever thing," Anne warned.

"Then I shall interrupt often," I promised, "for it would be such a change from your usual—"

"Borrowing one of your own coarse expressions," Anne suggested, "that last remark of yours is 'rough stuff.' It *should* be unworthy of you; it *is* quite to be expected of you. Do you want to hear the clever thing I was about to say?"

"I not only *want* to hear it—I passionately *long* to hear it; I pant with eagerness to hear it; I am famished with the hunger to hear it; I am—"

"I was about to say that your observation as to credulity proved me greater than the government."

"A fact which has ever been patent to me," I acquiesced fondly, "though just how, pray tell me, does my remark prove it?"

"That is where my clever *bon mot* comes in," Anne chirked—yes, that's what she did; I don't know what it means, but she chirked. "I tax your credulity; the government has never found *anything* of yours to tax. I might also say something about that 'patent stuff' you handed me. I might say that what is patent to you might not be patent to the Patent Office. Joke!" Anne concluded abruptly.

"Anne, Anne," I reproved, "you are becoming egregiously slangy. That rag-time conversation of yours is the limit. Cut it out."

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"Believe me," she said, "I'll try. But listen; just what is the idea of sitting here holding Dollie dialogues? You are taking up a lot of my valuable time, and you know that Mr. Morton is waiting to take me out in his auto."

"You should say 'motor car' and be up to date," I instructed her. "Let Morton wait. Think how long I have waited. Jacob waited seven years for Rebecca—or was it Rachael or Ruth?—and I have waited even longer for you. Why, Anne dear, we've known each other since we used to make faces across the back fence—fifteen—no, twenty—"

"Believe me," said Anne—she really uses that expression too much—"these historical researches have no interest for me. I finished history long ago," and she departed hastily, slamming the door, leaving me to look out of her parlor window as she sailed away in Morton's car waving a flippant good-bye. I tried to believe that the motion was something like that of a kiss thrown in my direction, but I actually knew better.

*** *** Stars—indicating that time has elapsed, or something. It has.

"I suppose," I ventured, out of mere politeness, "that you had a perfectly lovely time out motoring with Morton."

"Believe me," breathed Anne with fervor, as she patted her dress into decorous folds after we had seated ourselves in the theater.

"Of course I'll believe you," I snapped; "and it isn't necessary for you to asseverate your joy in such emphatic fashion."

"Asseverate' is a good word," said Anne; "what does it mean?"

"I don't know," I admitted cheerfully; "but I don't want you to do it, no matter what it means."

"Mr. Morton is a most entertaining man," Anne volunteered, "and I hope—"

"Meaning, I suppose, that he entertains lavishly," I misinterpreted. "Well, if one has money enough and time enough to waste, one can be a most entertaining entertainer. One can entertain one's friends and one's acquaintances to one's heart's content, and one's fame will wax great in the land."

"One can have money," Anne observed, "and one can be very pleasant and likable nevertheless. One certainly can."

"One can," I said; "but *is* one—*does* one?"

"I repeat," said Anne, "that Mr. Morton is a most entertaining man. Personally, I mean. He has humor, sympathy, ability—"

"—wit, charm, geniality, magnetism, brilliancy, pulchritude, brains, breadth, strength, energy, persistence, competence—a very comfortable one, too—fascination, aplomb, elegance, ease and unctiousness, I take it—together with decision, masterfulness, courage—"

"Isn't your vocabulary about used up?" queried Anne.

"It was," I confessed. "If you hadn't interrupted just where you did, I'd have had to stop before I had completely chronicled the virtues of Mr. Morton."

"I'm glad you like him," said Anne, "because I want all my friends to approve."

"I presume," I said, after swallowing hard four times, "that Mr. Morton is about to be taken into your family!"

"Believe me," said Anne enthusiastically, as the curtain went up.

"Believe me," Anne complained, when the car had buzzed along the track for nearly twenty minutes, "you're fearfully dull tonight."

"Anne," I protested, "you certainly don't expect me to be my usual witty, clever and sparkling self tonight, do you?"

"No," she giggled, "I can't expect you to be sparkling or chatty or clever, but I do expect you to be yourself. You've had the grumps ever since the curtain went up, and it was a funny play, too."

"Funny as a crutch," I gloomed. "But it wasn't the play that bothered me."

"What was it then?" Anne demanded, all innocence and solicitude, as though she hadn't just a couple of hours before stuck a knife in my heart and twisted it around.

"What was it?" I exclaimed. "What was it? That is foolish question Number 1,226,432. Do you mean to say that you don't know what has ailed me this evening?"

"Believe me," said Anne, "I *do* mean to say that I don't."

"Well, I *will* believe you, Anne, but it's the hardest job my credulity has had yet—and I've swallowed some pretty big ones, too."

"But what *is* the matter with you?" asked Anne again.

"So long as you don't know, I won't tell. There's no use in spoiling or even clouding your happiness with the troubles of an old bachelor like me."

"Old! Like you!" Anne laughed.

"Why, Jimmie, you're only—"

"Stop," I commanded, "stop! Remember this: I am only three years older than you are."

"But I want to know what is the matter," Anne reiterated. "We've been pals for years, Jimmie, and now you won't let your old chum—think of it, Jimmie, I *am* old; I'm twenty-seven—you won't let her help you out. Tell me all about it, please, old man."

"It's not much, Anne"—I reckon my voice quavered a bit—"it's not so much, only—only Morton has got what I've wanted and waited for all these years. I know I haven't been sentimental, Anne, but I've felt it just the same, and now I'm sort of lonesome and downhearted and out of it all, of course."

"You—Morton! Wh—what's that? Do you mean to say that you want to marry sis, too?"

"Sis!" I almost shouted. "No; I

want to marry *you*. Doesn't— isn't— Morton—hasn't he—"

"Morton wants to marry my sister Mabel, Jimmie, and he took me out this afternoon to tell me about it, private like."

"And I—Anne dear, where do I get off?"

"You get off at this corner"—she dimpled, as she pressed the bell—"and

take me home. Oh, Jimmie, don't you know that a street car is no place to propose? Suppose you are accepted, what can you do?"

"Then you *will* marry me, Anne?" I whispered joyously, as we stepped into the shadow of the trees that fringed the suburban street. There was no one in sight. Then she stretched out her arms.

"Be-lieve me, Jimmie," she said.



THE HOUSE OF DREAMS

By Rosalie Arthur

THE fireflies light their golden lamps
To guide me through the mist
That veils the world, as night comes on,
With pearl and amethyst.
Now, now the time;
I hear the chime
That calls me to my tryst!

The House of Dreams lies just beyond
The farthest edge of day;
Its doors stand wide to welcome me
In old familiar way;
My weary feet
Are light and fleet
The summons to obey.

Within its walls are lovely peace
And every withheld thing—
Comfort and rest and heart's desire
Such perfect solace bring,
That I forget
My eyes were wet,
And learn again to sing.



MANY a fellow doesn't get married because the girl's father can't afford it.

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

By Reginald Wright Kauffman

AT the bottom of the canyon, far below my window seat,
Through the crash of cab and trolley, down the ribbon of a street,
Endless crowds are pouring forward on their flaring, fevered way
From factory or office to the tenement or play.
And I linger, half expectant, with this scented note in hand
That has bid me to a woman's side in tinsel fairyland;
Half expectant, half consenting, when above the farthest roofs,
Swinging out in all the glory of a night in early June,
The herald of high memories, majestically moves
Across my patch of heaven night's calm miracle, the moon.

I remember how it shone thus in a winter long ago,
When the skies were cold with starlight and the fields were white with snow,
And there fared by that kind lantern, hand in hand, a boy and girl—
I have seen its face reflected where the Xingu's eddies whirl;
I have had its ray to guide me down a Colorado trail;
It has led me through the desert where a Bedouin would fail;
In the great Northwestern country it and I have stood alone
In a wilderness of mountains, underneath the eyes of God,
In the midst of leagues uncharted, black defile and silver cone,
Where the red men's tents have vanished, where no white man ever trod.

It has called, and I have followed; and tonight a woman's word—
Oh, the sweetest and the subtlest that my ears have ever heard—
Bids me stay; and if I tarry, I shall nevermore depart,
Only linger by her always, lips to lips and heart to heart,
Shall I heed her? Shall I slumber on a lily couch of love,
While the Open Road is calling to the mountain peaks above?
No! I take the higher thralldom, and tomorrow's sun shall see
Once again my wand'ring footsteps on the time-tried trail beat true,
Toward the ultimate wild spaces, where to love is just to be,
Where all service is but freedom underneath God's sky of blue!

RENDING THE VEIL

By Julian Hawthorne

THERE are reasons why I'd better not tell this story. I'm a doctor, and, for all my professional brethren know, orthodox as a dose of quinine. So why should I, at my age, upset my repute and their equanimity by putting my name to a thing so subversive of orthodoxy as this?

The Spartan boy kept his fox under his pinafore, but it ate his entrails. Such a fox is this tale of mine; it has gnawed me for years and now I mean to be rid of it. I'm alone in the world; my poor wife died years ago, and the lovely boy she gave birth to is dead, too, now. I have all the money I need—Judith Lyndon, had she lived, would have had it at my death, for I loved her like a daughter—and assisted in bringing her into the world, in fact; if my colleagues rise against me, I can retire to some wilderness where folks don't know so much as to be afraid of what they don't know. So here goes!

Marlowe Gordon, too, I knew intimately for twenty years. There was a man! I never met a better, and I've met men in my time. And what a pair—what a One, rather—were he and Judith! Yet the Almighty withheld them from what we call marriage. Why, I don't know, though of late I might make a guess at it.

Of course Marlowe, at nineteen, had given his name to a silly, pretty animal who was even then secretly drugging herself, and who lost what mind she had a few years later. She's alive today in a private asylum, and he, instead of getting a divorce, was damned fool enough—pardon me, but my manners were never smooth and I'm too old to reform—to stay that maniac's husband till the

hour he died. He had punctilios—no-tions of honor. He wouldn't argue the point—"Oh, you know, there are things a fellow can't do!"—and he set apart half his income to keep her comfortable and visited her personally once a year.

Enough of that!

He became a sort of transcendental soldier of fortune. Physically, he had the limbs, the torso and the grace of Lysippus's Apoxyomenos in the Vatican—the Athlete with the Strigil. His head, though, was Norman—aquiline, grave, high forehead hollowed at the temples, eyes liquid, slow moving and black. In repose you admired him, but as soon as he smiled you loved him, whether you were man or woman. On women, however, he little cared to look—not that he didn't reverence them, but because he held them to be none of his business. But when he met Judith—ah! He couldn't help being human. But even then he was his own master, which means that she was not his mistress. Some solicitous saints may have thought otherwise, I know; but never mind.

He tented with Bedouins, sledged with Esquimaux, fished for pearls along the Barrier Reef with Malays, came out of the African bush with tusks on his shoulders and clipped tigers' claws in Ceylon jungles. He carried to his dying day the wound one of these great cats gave him. He often acted as mediator between savage tribes and civilization, and for saving the life of the Shah from an assassin he got the Star of Ormuzd. But pshaw! I don't want to make a dime novel hero out of poor Marlowe, from whom in a year you couldn't have dragged half as much autobiography as I've set down in a dozen lines.

Let it suffice that he was a gentleman, did good and not harm, had the spirit of a paladin and the heart of a child.

II

Now for Judith. On the whole, though, I'll begin with that Sunday evening, September 4th, when I dined at her studio with Gordon as the only other guest.

Judith was twenty-five, an orphan and a painter of portraits, making enough to keep herself in good style. She was, at all events, independent as an Amazon astride a stallion in the Libyan desert. Her only companion was Sara, the deaf and dumb Syrian that Marlowe gave her—but that anecdote is too long to tell here. Sara, ancient and smoke-dried, was devoted to Judith and to Marlowe, and took notice of no one beside.

Judith's lineage was good enough, but her actual parents were poor creatures; out of the compost heap grew the Rose of the World. I don't quarrel with heredity, but nature sometimes seems to enjoy pulling our complacent scientific chair from under us. An occasional reversion to type of the redeeming kind maintains the ancient virtue. You may call this a crotchet; but if a man would be aught but a bewildered groper or dumb ass in this world, he must be allowed once in a while to use his imagination.

Judith, Marlowe and I, then, gathered round the little table in the shadowy studio. They loved each other; I loved them, and am happy to believe that they liked and trusted old Doctor Quentin Winyard for all his crotchets and testiness. They knew I understood and approved of them—yes, and would have approved of 'em even had they done much more to merit criticism than they ever did. I may respect and yet may not share such punctilios as Marlowe's. And when punctilios are in question, it's apt to be the man rather than the woman who's afflicted by them. When, for instance, a real woman—and Judith was that if ever there was one—

when a real woman loves, she loves—and nothing else in the world matters to her. But Marlowe, a dozen or fifteen years older than she, by way of protecting her against the world, protected her against herself. Still they were happy; human beings are queer fish—perverse pigs. Pigs like to run the other way; our Puritan ancestors derived like enjoyment out of blue laws and scriptural patter; Christian martyrs reveled in being burned and disemboweled. But when I get to the other world I shall visit that particular den in Tophet where abides the busybody who launched the theory of mortifying the flesh! The link between soul and body is closer than some folk suspect, and when the soul goes to its place it takes its physiology with it—stomach, liver, solar plexus, cremaster muscles, toenails—but I'm too garrulous; back to that Sunday evening!

III

STUDIOS—bona fide ones—are the most nearly human habitations left us. "*La femme degantée est nue*," says the proverb; the studio is the artist not naked only but transparent.

Lights dispersed here and there, shaded with translucent covers like gems, illuminated each its neighborhood and left the rest to mystery and imagination. Beauty, color, harmony, darklings, sparklings, irregular corners and jutting galleries, with an organic life bringing all into keeping. A jade green cloth covered our round table, on which a tall-stemmed lamp like a cloudy moon shed light like rain. Good things to eat and drink and round-cupped wine glasses that rang like harp notes when struck together. Judith as usual mixed the salad, her supple wrists bending and turning; Sara brought in and took out the things, her old brown heels lifting up and dropping the hem of her dull blue *sari* as she stepped—anklets jingling, earhoops swinging, lean flesh showing between breast and hip. But Judith waited at table, poured the wine, changed the dishes—a slender arm

sliding down past your shoulder. She had a fancy for costumes, and tonight was an Egyptian princess with peacock headdress, black hair plaited down past her ears, on her forehead a jewel, the thin silk of her robe kissing her breast and loins.

"How beautiful are thy feet in sandals, O prince's daughter!
The joints of thy thighs are like jewels;
Thy two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a roe.
Thy neck is like a tower of ivory;
Thine eyes are the pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bath-rabbi,
And the smell of thy breath like apples."

I rolled that out at her, and Marlowe laughed, lifting his glass, and went on with it:

"And thy mouth like the best wine
That goeth down smoothly for my Beloved,
Gliding through the lips of those that are asleep—"

"That are in love' fits better," said I, and we drank it down.

Marlowe was in evening dress, and it became his athletic figure; since his tiger wound he'd been growing lean, but his shoulders were broad as ever; and for Judith's pleasure he wore suspended on his shirt front by a wide blue ribbon his Star of Ormuzd. He was masculine as she was feminine, and they made a perfect whole—the two halves of human nature restored to each other. That wound of his, by the way—as Judith once betrayed to me in one of her unzoned moods—was got by protecting from the attack of the beast one of his native bearers; just like him to do such an idiotic thing, but one couldn't love him the less for it.

As for my privileged, quasi-paternal self, I was allowed to wear my old brown velveteen lounging jacket, and on my pate the silk sculcap Judith made me for my last—the fifty-seventh birthday. So we were a motley trio, and mortal men and women don't have better times than we had. After that perfect little dinner we had coffee and cigarettes on the semicircular divan that was one of the best thoughts of the studio. Judith sat with one foot under her, the other hanging out bare but for the little heelless

slipper clinging to her toes. Her lines went in long, smooth undulations; her skin had a faint luster; waist as well as feet were virgin of modern grip machines. On the point of her right shoulder was a tiny black birthmark shaped like a star, and on her left instep, at the junction of the second and third toes, another precisely like it. Perhaps nature put 'em there to confound human science.

Wallowing porpoiselike amid the silk cushions, I absorbed the lovely scene and said to myself it was lucky—very lucky—that Judith took up art. For she had urgent need for expression, and for a woman of her make only two ways of expression exist—art and love. And by love I mean not only the beautiful spiritual thing between her and Marlowe, a flower of Paradise without fruit, but flower, fruit and all, the round of the sexual cycle. With her nature and without her art she might have been a Rhodope or Cleopatra; but art relieved the pressure and kept her out of mischief—splendid mischief no doubt! Yes, thank the Lord for art and Marlowe! The two together saved her; either lacking, she'd have blazed up into a flame fatal to herself and others.

IV

WE sat chatting at our ease and contemplating under the clear light that fell upon it Judith's last portrait—a full length view of Marlowe himself. It was the last thing the girl ever painted, and was her masterpiece. The tall figure wore the Persian caftan, and his hands, hanging easily before him, lightly held by hilt and point a naked scimitar—the one probably with which he had cut down the creeping rascal who had attacked the Shah. There was fire in his eyes but tranquillity on his mouth—a characteristic expression—her lover painted by the woman who loved him, looking, like all great portraits, more like the original than he himself did. Inspiration means that the artist has caught insight from the creative source; such a work is alive—an immortal soul got on canvas.

When I said something to that effect, Marlowe asked, with a half-smile, "Psychology or physiology, Quentin?"

Judith rubbed the back of her hand along my cheek. "They're inseparable, aren't they, dear?" she said, being in the habit of making fun of my idiosyncrasies.

"And she's painted her soul as well as yours into the picture," I went on. "There you both stand, united and incarnate forever!"

Judith became grave. "If I died, would my soul go into him?" But I preferred to ignore that. Marlowe, however, shook his head, and remarked, "Deep waters!"

"Why shouldn't two souls occupy one body?" persisted Judith.

"The Bible tells me of cases of possession," said he; "but it was always of demons, and you're not— What are you?" he asked, smiling round at her.

"But for you and the Doctor I'd be a black, sooty, howling devil, wouldn't I?" she appealed to me. "But what is a body, to begin with?"

"Sir Oliver Lodge says matter is a twist in the ether of space," I replied, "but he doesn't say how it twists. We think of our bodies as permanent, but science is beginning to wonder why they don't change with every breath."

"Please may I swim ashore?" laughed Marlowe.

"The only case in point I know of," said I, "is something in Swedenborg about two married folks in Heaven who, seen from a proper distance, appeared not as two but as one angel. But as for you and Marlowe—there'd be an explosion, and nothing left of either of you!"

"Nonsense! Souls don't occupy space."

"I was at a materializing seance once," began Marlowe; but I stopped him.

"That's another category. Spiritists plaster substance on a spirit from outside; nature starts from the germ and works outward."

"But where does the germ start from?" Judith wanted to know.

"I don't know," said I. "May we have more coffee?"

And at the word in shuffled deaf and dumb Sara with the coffee pot. I dare say she knew the answer to all our riddles.

"That portrait does look alive tonight," said Marlowe. "How did you do it, girl?"

She caught up his hand in both hers and kissed it. "By love," she said, and she sent him a passionate look. "Tell me, if by dying I could give you my soul would you let me die?"

It wasn't the words but the temper in which they were spoken. The relations between her and Marlowe were unstable. The girl was capable of anything, and her persistence in this notion of literal soul possession was disquieting.

There is a courtesan in the best of women, and it's one of the things that makes her—woman! It all passed in a moment, but the tension was manifest.

Marlowe faced her fairly. "When you're an old woman," he said, quietly, "you'll know that we find out what we'd like to do in this world by not being able to do it. Meanwhile you might pour the coffee."

It showed me how he could master her whom no one else could master. She passed it off with a woman's adroitness, pouting like a scolded child.

"So I'm to spend the rest of my life pouring coffee! But take care!" she flashed at him. "Some day, when I'm dead, you'll look in your shaving glass and see my face in it!"

Marlowe was to take a train that night for the summer capital, to confer with the President about a matter of secret foreign diplomacy. He retired to the models' room to change his clothes, while I exercised a little private diplomacy in tranquillizing the vibrations which had been stirred in Judith by their little encounter. She listened absently to my prattle, and at the end of it reverted to the previous question without apology. "The marriage service says," she remarked, "that these twain shall be made one flesh. But if they love each other and can't be married, then the only way is for one of them to die and make the other's flesh her own."

"The hermit crab," said I, "some-

times abandons its shell to take another, and finds, too late, that the other doesn't fit it. What then?"

"Oh, I'd risk that!" was her answer. "If Marlowe heard me knock, he'd open." And with that Marlowe emerged from the dressing room, and I soon after took my departure, in order to give the young people opportunity to tell each other good-bye unhampered. But I felt a little uneasy in my mind.

Judith lived northwest of the Park, and I, according to my habit, proceeded through the Park on my way home. I'm not so swift a walker as I was thirty years ago, and in less than a mile I was overtaken by the long striding knight errant. The moon was full and the air cool and sweet. I have what may be described as a waddle in my gait, like old Sam Johnson of blessed memory; and as we walked on side by side our shoulders occasionally touched, and each time I was conscious of an emanation from him of happiness and the vigor of life. The "aura," as occultists call it, is a physiological fact, and is often of more service to doctors in their diagnoses than some of them might be willing to admit.

In fact, he presently said: "I never loved life so much as now. Quentin, old man, some great good fortune is on its way to me! I feel ridiculously happy. The Almighty put it into that glorious creature's heart to care for an old dervish like me, who's been obstructing the path of navigation these five and forty years; and tonight I've somehow got it in my noddle that I'm going to be of some real use to her. Biessed powers, Quentin, do you think I could ever make her happy? I feel even physically fit as I haven't for years—that wound of mine, thanks to you, seems quite healed at last, and I am like a boy out of school. How glorious she is—isn't she?"

Oh, my dear, beloved Marlowe!

"Don't walk so fast," I said. "I have ingrowing fat, and I weigh two hundred and fifty in the Turkish bath."

He laughed, and we strolled on beneath the moon at a more rational pace. Our talk became romantic, and by the time we had passed the cathedral we had arranged the future very agreeably.

"Look—we exchanged keepsakes tonight," he said. "I gave her that old Venetian seal ring of mine, you know—the kind the Doges used to wed the Adriatic with—and she gave me that Egyptian scarabæus she wore tonight. Oh, my darling!" He kissed the mystic beetle and stuffed it back inside his shirt.

A newsboy came trotting down the Avenue behind us yelling his extra: "Terr'ble ax'dent!" Passing us at the corner of the street, he half turned, proffering a copy; I waved him off.

He sprang into the roadway just as a motor car whizzed down on him. The boy, like a scared hen, stopped in his tracks; the chauffeur didn't see him, but Marlowe did.

He leaped forward, reaching for the boy with his left hand, caught him by the shoulder and, with a great heave, flung him round to the left almost at my feet. The effort lost him his balance, and the car struck him a heavy blow under the right arm, just where the tiger had struck him seven years before. He was whirled round into my arms. The blow had not been necessarily fatal, but as soon as I felt the writhe of his body against mine I knew the old wound had been torn open.

The car stopped, and out of it bounced—of all absurd persons—poor little Jason Curtis, frightened as a rabbit. "Oh, my land, Doctor!" he whimpered, recognizing me.

I lifted Marlowe into the machine, gave the chauffeur my address, which was close by, and in five minutes I had my friend on my operating table. He was conscious, but there was blood in his mouth. "Is it serious, Doctor?" whined miserable little Jason.

"It wasn't your fault," I growled. "Drive to the station; have the corner come here; leave him to me—get out!"

So Marlowe and I were alone together.

Our eyes met, and I saw that he knew death was near. Yet the next moment he smiled as if at some humorous thought, and said, just above a whisper:

"Were you going to tell me I must

die, Quentin, old man. I'm going to be more alive than ever I was!" Then he added slowly: "But isn't it strange? Oh, wonderful—beautiful!"

I took this, of course, for the delirium that often precedes the end.

"It's all right," I said. "Just rest quiet and leave me to manage."

I cut open his shirt with a scalpel. There was the great, angry bruise, with the tiger scar within it, crescent-shaped, four inches long. And there, too, was the scarabæus, fast to its silken cord.

"A shame to frighten her at this time of night," he went on muttering. "She was asleep. Don't be frightened, darling—it's I; I'm here. Yes, all well. Oh, that was nothing—that's over. Yes, as we said—forever! Where are you?" he exclaimed suddenly. "Ah, I see! Yes, I understand. But isn't it wonderful?"

His voice died away; apparently he imagined himself to be with Judith. It was as tranquil and happy a death as ever I saw. He seemed to sink into a pleasant dream that became deeper and deeper. His pulse under my finger beat slowly and more slowly for several minutes; at the end an expression passed across his face that somehow reminded me of Judith. Never had there been a lover more tender and true than he.

I arranged the body; it looked like an ivory statue, perfect in its proportions. The skin was without blemishes of any kind except for the scar. It was spotless, as I believed his soul to be. And as one often sees, the lines that time and trouble had scored on his face vanished, and he looked like a youth of thirty. I stood gazing down at him and thought of the grandeur of death, of the loneliness and love it leaves behind it, of the marvel of it—and then that tremendous thought of the immortal soul living on! "More alive than ever," he had said.

The ringing of my telephone bell startled me. I looked at my watch; five o'clock. Who could want me at an hour so unusual?

V

"Is that Dr. Quentin? I just wanted you to say something to me; it's all so strange! What time is it? Oh, it seems

like a hundred years, or—eternity—no time at all! Not to tell me anything, you know; only to hear your voice. You'll be up here later, won't you? A wonderful thing happened—I didn't know what to think. Don't come till evening—we're not ready yet. I'll let you know the hour. I feel better now; everything seemed slipping away, so I had to call you up. Don't come till I send you word—but be sure to come! Good-bye."

Though my profession obliges me to use it scores of times every day, I have always hated telephones; somehow they go against my grain. Sitting listening at the wire for my call, I've sometimes heard of strange things—whisperings, mutterings, secrets, not meant for my ear. And even the person I'm talking with sounds sometimes like a spirit personating him from another world. Through that mysterious crevice in the ether what messages may not come to one? We open a gate for our business and social convenience; but we don't know what it is, and we can't tell what unbidden guests may enter.

It was Judith's voice, of course; but it had a queer sound—muffled, altered, modified. But for what she said, I might have doubted it was she. For that matter, what she said was queer enough—nothing rational about it. She had probably waked up from some vivid dream and felt the need of human companionship. But what had she meant by "we"—"we're not ready yet?" Who was with her at that hour in the morning? It wasn't likely she referred to Sara; and she had no intimates but Marlowe and me. And I wasn't to come to her till she sent me word—till evening! In that case, she was apt to hear of Marlowe's death from the papers, or some other source, before I had an opportunity to break it to her. Well, but she didn't read the papers, and would very probably stay in the studio all day. I was perplexed, but I made an effort to throw it off; I had enough to do. The legal formalities appertaining to the death had to be gone through with; and Marlowe had often expressed a desire to be cremated, not buried. I must

make arrangements for that. I could very well postpone my visit to the poor girl until evening. And she would have twelve hours more of happiness.

As I turned from the telephone, my nerves, overstrained for some hours and thus interrupting the logical processes of thought, played me one of those weird tricks that sometimes convey the impression of an hallucination. It seemed to me that Marlowe, alive and well, was standing just behind my shoulder and waiting to speak to me; the whole terrible episode of his death had dropped, for the moment, out of my consciousness. My hand, as I turned, had even made a movement to grasp his in pleasurable surprise. The next instant I saw the pale face upon the couch, and remembered that we should never again exchange that grasp in this world. It came upon me with a fresh shock.

Could Marlowe really be dead? I have seen a great deal of death; but I have sometimes wondered whether death be the one great reality in our existence, or whether it be of all appearances the least real. "More alive than ever"—once more those words came back to me. The sensation of his living presence still pervaded me. "Come, Winyard," I said to myself, "you need treatment!" I stepped to the wash basin and sponged my head and face with cold water. I stretched my arms and body to get the blood in circulation. After a few minutes my condition resumed the normal and I felt a natural lassitude, a great need for sleep. Three or four hours must still elapse before the regular routine of the day could begin; I threw myself into the operating chair opposite the couch on which the body lay and fell almost at once into a dreamless sleep.

I was awakened by a low, persistent knocking at the door. I was immediately in possession of my faculties—in good doctor fashion—gave a glance at the couch and then at my watch; a few minutes past nine. I opened the door and found my colored boy Julius. "I shall see no patients today," I told him.

"That's jest what I thought, Doctor"—he was sometimes kind enough to help me out in my thinking—"an' I been tell-

ing it to some of the folks that called in; but here's a party I ain't seen before—leastways I ain't sure of him—an' he says he got a message for you—he won't keep you more'n a minute. Mighty pressin', he seems to be, Doctor. It's jest as you say, Doctor."

I thought twice, and said: "Tell him to come in."

But before Julius could turn to execute this order, I saw, beyond him, advancing with a long, light step from the further room, a tall, slender figure whose movements and general aspect startled me from the curious resemblance they seemed, at that first glance, to bear to those of him whose body lay on the couch. This is a well known physiological phenomenon. When the nerves have been for any reason powerfully impressed, they show a tendency to repeat, upon any plausible pretext, the image of that which impressed them to the brain. I imagined in this stranger a likeness to the friend I had just lost.

My visitor came up to me and took my hand in his, which was warm and powerful; and he looked me in the eyes with a slight smile. I involuntarily gave back a step or two, and he followed me into the consulting room. Without relinquishing my hand, his look went past me and fixed upon the couch where the dead body lay, the head and face revealed above the sheet which covered the rest of the form. At the same moment I felt his grasp tighten strongly and then let go.

"Dead?" he said, with an intonation half musing, half interrogative.

"Did you know him?" I asked.

"A man isn't his body; he lives more than ever after death," he went on.

"Did you have a message for me?" I demanded.

"I wanted to see; it's a—a touching sight!" he said, his voice seeming to falter a trifle. "The home where we lived so long deserted forever!"

"Have we ever met before?" I asked, with an impatience due rather to the strange sensations I was undergoing than to any irritation.

"You are Marlowe Gordon's friend," said he, "and Judith Lyndon's." He

smiled into my eyes as he made this answer, which seemed to me no answer at all.

I scrutinized him narrowly. He wore a long surtout, black, with a sort of half-cape hanging from the shoulders—such a garment as is commonly used to cover evening dress. On his head was a black felt hat, soft and light, the brim pulled down over his forehead; he had not offered to remove it during our interview. He looked about thirty years of age, his face clean shaven, aquiline, striking; and his large dark eyes had a very winning, friendly expression. At moments the general resemblance to Marlowe Gordon, which I had noticed at the outset, was really remarkable; the next moment it would appear to change into something else. He might have been a younger brother of my friend, only Marlowe never had a brother that I knew of. His very clothes were such as I had seen Marlowe wear. I felt a distinct inward or temperamental attraction toward him, at the same time that, outwardly, I resented his unexplained intrusion.

"You didn't send in your name," I said. "Do you know Gordon and Miss Lyndon? I was told you had a message for me. All this seems extraordinary."

"It is extraordinary," he muttered, again letting his eyes rest on the dead body. He lifted a hand to button the collar of his surtout; on the third finger was a ring, which, in the glimpse I had of it, seemed an exact replica of the Venetian ring which Marlowe had been accustomed to wear, and which he had given as a keepsake to Judith the night previous. "Pardon me," he presently added, indicating the body with a gesture; "have you preserved the scarabæus which he had about his neck at the time of the accident?"

At this query I made an involuntary movement or ejaculation of amazement, as well I might. It was inconceivable that he should know so intimate a thing as this. He noted my disturbance, and it seemed to embarrass him. But once more his eyes softened with that singular, candid smile.

"The explanation is very simple, after all," he said. "I came here out of a

curiosity which you will forgive when you know the circumstances. I am a friend—an older one than you suspect. Yes, I did bring a message: that you should come to the studio at nine o'clock this evening. At the time you got the telephone call, the hour could not be fixed. You'll come then, won't you? But please don't try to communicate with us—with Judith, that is—in the meanwhile. We—she—needs that interval undisturbed. Just a little patience, dear Doctor, and you'll understand everything. Till nine this evening, then, good-bye."

He had grasped my hand again, turned and gone out, with his long stride, before I could command myself to say anything.

VI

JULIUS closed the outer door after him and came back to me with his eyes staring. "What's the matter?" I said testily. "You look as if you'd seen a ghost."

"The gen'lleman was a real gen'lleman all right," Julius replied; "but it sort o' scart me, his looking so much like Cap'n Gordon yonder. Times I thought it must be him—only I know'd the Cap'n was dead."

"No one else is to come in here except the coroner and the police," I said. I felt relieved by the boy's remark; it took a load from my mind. He had noticed what I had, so there was nothing in it but coincidence. To be sure, there were still things to be explained; but no matter. "The gen'lleman was a real gen'lleman"—that was the main thing. The rest would no doubt prove simple, as he had said.

"Besides, why should a man who has once got safe out of this world ever care to come back to it?" I said to myself, thinking back over the long, wearisome road I had myself traveled. But then I remembered that Marlowe had left behind him the woman he loved. And that reflection stuck in the back of my mind all day long.

It was only a few minutes past nine o'clock when I stepped into the eleva-

tor in the studio building, the top floor of which Judith occupied. I had a question for Jim, the elevator boy.

"Jim, had Miss Lyndon any callers after the Captain and I went home last night?"

"No, Doctor; no one ain't been up to her floor till now when you're goin' up yourself."

"And nobody has come from there, of course?"

"Somebody might 'a' come down the stairs whilst I was in the car," he admitted; "but if no one wan't there, where'd he be coming from?"

This seemed conclusive; but in that case, how did my visitor get his information? Jim rattled back the steel door of the car, and I stepped out without having answered myself that query.

I touched the electric bell at the door of the apartment, and Sara immediately opened it. How that deaf and dumb creature could know when the bell rang was always a puzzle to me; but she was a more or less supernatural person in some respects. She grimaced and admitted me. If the news of Marlowe's death had reached Judith I fancied that Sara would have shown some signs of it, for, as I have said, she was devoted to Marlowe. But she appeared, if anything, rather less solemn and orphic than usual.

I was now in the little private hall of the apartment. I knocked at the studio door—the four raps, in a certain rhythm, which for years past had signaled Doctor Winyard. After a few moments the door slowly swung open.

Whom did I expect to see? Judith, of course. How was it possible that, there and at that time, there should be anyone else in her studio?

A room with which one has long been familiar, where for years one has been a welcome guest, wherein one has been used to meet persons whom he loves and who love him, in which some of the best and happiest hours of his life have been passed—such a room acquires for him a personal and almost human quality, and as he enters it it seems to give him a kindly and intimate greeting; it smiles quietly upon him; it invites him; it

caresses his heart. Everything in it has associated itself with some humane emotion, with some pleasant thought, with some gentle episode, and his eyes are met on every side with objects which obscurely recall these memories. There is in the room a living spirit, made up of the mingling of many spirits, in many moods, whose sympathies have created it and given it recognizable character. Therefore any perception of change is at once perceived, and, even were it in itself winning and agreeable, it arouses some feeling of disappointment or anxiety.

There is nothing fanciful about this; you may call it a physiological fact, if you will. The "aura"—as persons of occult culture term it—is, as I was saying just now, an empirical and substantial truth, and is more or less felt by everyone, though the light waves whereby it is manifested to the optical nerves are so subtle that few can actually see it. Neither can we see what we call force of character, for example; but nothing else is more real. I cannot, of course, speak for my professional brethren; but I have always had a notion that some of us who are famous for diagnosis owe much of our success to sensibility in this direction. They perceive the "aura" of their patients; it manifests all secrets of the organism, and it cannot lie.

Now as the studio door swung open there came forth a breath which disquieted me. Some change had taken place—not a repellent or a hostile one by any means—but there was a difference. The Judith key, if I may so call it, to which I had spontaneously attuned myself, met with a discord. I stood at a loss.

Judith had always been a lover of light and an artist in its management; her candles, lamps and bulbs were transformed into glowing jewels by translucent screens and shades of her own design, giving out a soft but full effulgence. It was an idiosyncrasy.

But to me now, peering uneasily through the tall oblong of the doorway, the room appeared almost dark. The customary rich effulgence was lacking. There was, too, a further change, but I

could not yet define it. There was a welcome, and even a deeply cordial one, but not the one I had expected.

As I stood there my heart began to beat very heavily.

The figure standing yonder just within the threshold—who was it? Too tall for Judith, though she was tall; yet the robe it wore, falling from shoulders to feet, with a girdle about the waist, might be used by a woman. The robe was of dark material, and the obscurity of the room—though I now saw that candles in colored shades were burning here and there—prevented my discerning details.

Not a woman; the breadth of the shoulders, the carriage of the head and the pose, which recalled to me the portrait of Marlowe standing with the scimeter in his hands, were masculine. But the figure came forward a step, holding out both its hands; and these movements brought Judith vividly to my mind. So had she often come forward to greet me at the door.

"Dear Dr. Quentin, won't you come in?"

The words were heartily spoken, with the accent of a smile in them, as it were, and the voice seemed so familiar to me that, in the same moment, and without misgiving, I was holding those welcoming hands in mine; and yet the voice was not Judith's, though hers sounded through it; and Marlowe's it could not be, though it was full of his. I was drawn forward into the room, bewildered, but with the thought beneath all bewilderments, "It's all right." And the voice—oh, unmistakably Marlowe's now—was saying: "It was just about as puzzling to us at first as it must be to you, dear fellow; we didn't know how to manage it exactly. It was sure to give you a shock, the best we could do; and we went down to your office this morning to look things over and see whether you'd recognize anything unusual. I rather fancy you did, but Judith doubted it; but she was startled by that face on the couch, you know, and was hardly able to judge. So it seemed best to give you the day to think it over; and we put on this Persian dress and arranged the

lights so as to ease things along a little. But of course it's inexplicable, in a way; though it seems to us now the most natural thing in the world. And as for old Sara—you'd think she expected nothing else! Well, the worst is over and you have survived; we may as well have a little more light now."

He touched the bulb that hung down from the cluster in the ceiling, and the room was immediately illumined. My eyes swiftly made the circuit of it; we were alone there, the speaker and I. As our glances met he smiled broadly and took me playfully by the shoulders, as Marlowe had been wont to do. "Can't you find her?" he said.

"She is alive?" I said; but the question was more than half affirmation.

"We're both alive!" was the reply. "Believe it, Quentin—only believe it!"

Science expounds the material world, philosophy the spiritual; miracle, conceded by philosophy but denied by science, illustrates the control of the inferior by the superior order—of matter by spirit. But so subtle is nature's economy that the constant miracle of daily life throughout the universe can always be interpreted as the play of natural cause and effect, the beginning of it all only being postulated.

Let this constancy, however, be once interrupted—let an effect appear whose cause stands outside of the traditional succession, and we have the miracle which either drives men insane or prompts them to deny the evidence of sense or—the third alternative—inspires them to belief—to that kingly certainty which disregards material proof and bases itself on spiritual conviction.

Well, I can only say that it is an experience which tries the soul, and from which a man issues other than he had heretofore been. For an awful moment God and the World seemed to face each other in my heart. But the divine prevailed.

My knees gave way beneath me, and I found myself seated on the semi-circular divan, weak as an infant and feeling not unlike one. Vulgar wonder and curiosity were banished; I was in-

different for the moment even to the special event which had overthrown my barriers, in the flood of reverence and humility at the manifestation of divine love and power which inundated my soul with its fragrant tides. My friends were beside me, and I—tough old sinner as I am—was content and happy as a child in its mother's bosom.

VII

THERE followed a silence in the studio—not an empty one; it seemed full of a flowing music, of the spiritual harmony between me and the other. Yet the material setting of it all was never more distinct. There on the corner of the rug was a faded stain where Judith had let fall her palette years ago. A drape, stiffly embroidered, hung a little askew from the gallery railing—a hundred times I had idly purposed to set it straight. An unfinished sketch of my head, begun long since, peeped out ruddy-gilled above the delicate design of an Eastern screen. Such things, befriending my lower consciousness, comforted me in the heights to which I was lifted; I hadn't lost touch with this solid, foolish old world.

The splendid youth who was my companion had thrown himself down within arm's reach of me on the divan. The vigor and vividness of life radiating from this personage were like a flaming fire, but soothing, not exciting. It glowed through him strong and resonant, as he sat musing and turning the Venetian ring on his finger. Gradually I got an impression that resembled that produced by the nearness of a beautiful woman; he glanced up, and from those masculine Norman features I seemed to meet the look of Judith. Yes, it was so!

She said—I don't know how else to tell this—she said then, stretching out a hand to touch mine:

"It's just that Marlowe and I are husband and wife—that's all! I used to wonder when I was little what it meant in the marriage service: 'Not twain but one flesh'; they said it was symbolical, but I thought it should be really so. And when last night you told

that angel story of how, at a distance, two married persons appeared not as two but as one angel, I thought: 'There! It's true after all.' And oh, I wanted it so! But I thought: 'I suppose it couldn't be in this world.' But there seemed no other way for Marlowe and me to be married here. Of course it was my dying, not his, that I thought of. I misbehaved myself, but Marlowe forgave me; I wouldn't have been wicked if I hadn't been sure he would always forgive me!"

Her voice spoke through his just as she looked through his eyes. I had brought her scarabæus with me, and I now took it from my pocket and gave it to her. She kissed it and hung it round her neck.

"When I called you at dawn on the 'phone," she went on, "it had—the wonder had begun to happen—I think it was some hours before; I had been awakened suddenly some time before midnight, dreaming of a terrible blow here beneath my right arm, and I seemed to be dying. But I heard Marlowe's voice saying to me; 'I'm coming to you, beloved!' and I was sitting up in my bed; and I dropped back all numbed—I fainted I suppose.

"When I woke again I felt, oh, so strong and happy, all thrilling with the thought of him and of some great good thing that had happened to us. I'd never felt him so near. It burned me like a beautiful fire. I stretched out my arms and cried out loud: 'I love you, darling!' and at the same moment I heard his voice say: 'I love you, darling!' He must be there! I started up and said, 'Marlowe!' His voice said, 'Marlowe!' It came from my lips—his voice! Then I heard—this time it was not I but he that said it: 'We're together forever!' I was frightened, but oh, so tenderly frightened—not my real heart, you know; and I whispered—I didn't dare speak loud: 'Where are you?'

"He didn't answer. My brain was spinning; I put my hands to my head, and then I screamed! For my hair was short and crisp and wavy; my cheeks had the roughness of a man's. I looked at my hands—"

She held them toward me, those sinewy, shapely hands—the hands of her lover!

"Then I knew," she said. "By and by I got out of bed and knelt down, and our two souls prayed to our Heavenly Father. We asked Him to bless the husband and wife that He had made and united. We were trembling with awe and joy. It was our marriage."

Poor old Doctor Quentin was crying like a baby, and never before in his life had been so happy. Her voice—their voice—melted my heart.

"We went to Sara's room," she continued; "she loved us and I wanted her to know. But she seemed to know already. She took my hands and pressed them against her forehead; then she knelt and kissed my feet—but they were his feet—though—see—my little birthmark is on the instep, and here on my shoulder, too!" She pulled aside the Persian caftan, and I saw on his manly neck the mark that I knew her by.

"When my body was changed to his, they stayed," she said; "and here"—she laid a hand on her right side—"I found the tiger scar; they are our keepsakes."

Yes, verily, those marriage signatures, as they might be called, were there! And they seemed to reconcile our world with the other.

"But we are one real person, through and through," she added—"only that—"

She hesitated; and as I looked, that which was she melted back, as it were, into the depths of her other self, and that other, smiling, took up the word.

"What she means is that we are as man was before he was separated into Adam and Eve. But these are deep waters!"

VIII

I SPENT six months in the West Indian island of Jamaica many years ago; there are rivers there which suddenly, in mid-force, vanish into the depths of the earth and emerge again miles away. What caverns of magic splendor and mystery they pass through in the interval no man knows.

After the revelation which had been made to me I could not speak; but communion between me and those two beloved spirits did not cease; it continued in unknown regions beyond the scope of mortal faculties. The seed achieves its marvelous transformation into plant unseen, in the silence and remoteness of the ground; and the soul of man finds its way into knowledge of its own marvels voicelessly and beyond the faculty of expressing what it discovers. We sat silent for a long time; but the loving hand which I held led me far afield—further than to Arcturus and to the Pleiades.

And when, after that long, unutterable journey, I found the way back to myself again, I sought instinctively to handle the commonplaces of daily existence. Step by step I reentered the atmosphere of our world and recovered the footing of ordinary practical intercourse. And presently Sara, with her fathomless Oriental matter-of-factness, appeared with the brass coffee tray, and we sipped and smoked and chatted quite in the old familiar manner. What an invaluable protection against the august terrors of reality is the homely commonplace!

I said: "What perplexes me is, how we are to meet the public! Here's Marlowe, returned to the flower of his youth, but still looking enough like his old self to make folks wonder how a man can die and yet live. And as for Miss Judith Lyndon—what, I beg to know, is to be said about the disappearance of that eminent young portrait painter?"

Marlowe smiled, but with a serious look.

"No one but you, Quentin, will ever see us or know that we've existed. We only waited for you."

"What!" growled I, greatly put out. "You don't mean to tell me that you're off for India or some such outlandish place? No, no! Stay and let's face it out!"

"Oh, we shall never be very far from you, I think, Quentin," replied he; "but we are going further than to India."

Then my heart foreboded the truth, but I would not admit it.

"You've been given an opportunity,"

I hurried on, "such as mortal people never had before in this world! When two souls that love each other are fused into one, each not only doubles its powers, but multiplies them a thousand fold. Judith can be the most transcendent genius in painting that was ever heard of; and Marlowe, with his gift for helping folks out of troubles and foolishness, can become the greatest statesman and lawgiver on earth; between you you can rule mankind! Nothing can stand against you; you can bring back the Golden Age; you can set the clock of time forward for centuries at a jump! There's no mortal problem that your brain can't solve, no truth you can't find out and no good that you can't do! Your place is right here in the midst of civilization; so stand to your guns, I say, and never think of abandoning the ship at the very moment when you've got the tiller in your hands and are in sight of the Promised Land!"

But he shook his head.

"Judith and I have talked it all over, and the way of it seems to us to be like this: We've transcended a fixed condition of mortal existence; or you might put it that nature, in the lapse of time since Adam ceased to be alone, has lost some quality, or suspended some function, that she had before. It may be that we represent a state of mankind that is destined finally to exist on this earth; but, at any rate, we're before our time. As things are now, two souls in one body make too much concentration of life to be safe in this world."

"No, no; it's just what the world needs," I insisted. "You don't have to turn on your full force all at once. Live a thousand years, and spread the good work over centuries. We can be educated!"

"Our life is immortal," he replied; "but we must not live it here. Why, it's even physically impossible, my dear fellow! The fire of one soul burns up its body in the course of seventy years or so; but two souls—you said it yourself—kindle a flame that multiplies its ardor immeasurably, and will consume this poor helpless flesh in a few hours perhaps! Besides, Quentin, good isn't

done here in the way you try to make it out; it comes forth as the grass grows, showing secretly and silently in innumerable humble ways and places at once, broadening over continents like a tender flush, no blade of it conscious of itself or aware of what the others are doing, in the quiet glory of the sunlight of God's love. What the world needs is not a great man here and there, but myriads of kindly and unselfish ones; no dazzling lights, which bewilder more than they lead, but a warm universal daylight. We are taught slowly by our own mistakes, not abruptly and miraculously by any human wisdom, which proves foolishness in the end. The Creator sets the pace and we must follow it. Human science, and what it supposes to be the laws of nature, must have their season; and mortal sanity must not be put in peril.

"And even for ourselves this union of ours only teaches us its limitations. Our happiness is too great for these conditions. Already we're longing for the next step. Earth can't hold us, Quentin; we just wished to have you see us and understand how it is, and then—the Great Adventure!"

I sighed; I felt very shaky.

"Ah—that Great Adventure! You're the same old Marlowe—still adventuring; and now I suppose you'll be exploring the orbit of Orion, while I, at fifty-seven, still stick to that old office of mine, trying to teach fools how to keep alive. Oh, children," I broke out, "what shall I do without you?"

"But you shall never be without us," was the tender reply; and it was spoken by Judith.

I've made several attempts to set down the events of the next few hours; but I can't do it; the words seem a profanation of what is sacred. Besides, my story doesn't require it; for belief, or for disbelief, you've heard enough. For, after all, you can disbelieve if you will; oh, yes, there is always room for that! As I look back over what I've written, I see that nothing is herein stated which might not bear an interpretation different from the one I've

given it. You can think of me as an irrational old person who believes the way he loves, and won't see the natural explanation of what he himself relates. Yes, it's open to you to do that—and I don't mind; very likely, if that be your preference, it's better you should disbelieve.

At sunrise the next morning Sara and I stood by Judith's bed. The face that we looked down upon, after all was over, appeared no longer like Marlowe so much as like Judith. And this final change seemed to me a thing divinely wise and beautiful. And, too—to speak for myself—I loved Marlowe as much as one man may love another; but Judith—she was my very heart! And death restores the equilibrium.

But old deaf and dumb Sara—what was she thinking and feeling? If I were lonely, what must her loneliness be? Who could fathom her mystery? Not I. She was an incomprehensible being!

All through those ineffable hours between midnight and dawn, when the souls of the two lovers, became one, were piercing through the material scabbard like the glitter of the swords of the cherubim—when the material world itself seemed as an unsubstantial mist that dissolves and reforms and assumes transcendent shapes under the molding fingers of the wind—when, for moments, gates seemed to open into interior things and divine voices and

visions shone out and vanished again—when my own spirit shook its prison walls and cried out like a captive who, in his darkness, catches glimpses of the glory of liberty—all this while Sara had stood solid and inert, staring impassive on such a spectacle as, until now, mortal eye had not seen nor imagination figured.

But when the last poignant, triumphant agony had been undergone, and everlasting peace and silence had descended gently on what of our beloved remained to us, the old sibyl began to utter a moaning, undulating cry, like that which is fabled of the Celtic banshee; it took the rhythm of a wild chant, rising, sinking, gathering power and dying away to a murmur. She wrapped about her withered old visage the folds of her blue *sari* and slowly got down on her knees beside the bed; then she bent herself forward till her forehead touched the floor, upon which her hands beat a measured tattoo. It was a lamentation of nature, without words.

An incomprehensible being! She and I, in all outward things, were immeasurably remote from each other. But the love which she as well as I had borne them made a link between her inscrutable soul and mine, a link which I felt must not be broken. Love brings together the ends of the earth, and it speaks a language which has no need of words.



CONSTABLE (to man knocked down by automobile):—

You say you didn't see the number. Could you swear to the man?

COUNTRYMAN—I did, but I don't think he heard me.



IT'S not every sharp remark that has a point.

THE DAYS WE CELEBRATE

By Ellis Parker Butler

ON the morning of the Festival of Hats—this is satire, for I can be satirical, bitterly satirical, on occasion—I went to church. It was two years ago, and the church was well filled with new hats in honor of the day. The official name of the day was not New Hat Day, but Easter Sunday.

This name was given the festival by the Anglo-Saxon peoples when Christianity was adopted by them, because the church festival took the place of the pagan festival in honor of the Goddess of Spring, Eástra. All peoples living in lands where the seasons rotate have celebrated with joy the return of spring. (I got this information out of the encyclopedia).

I went to church. It was a beautiful day, sunny and just cold enough to make one glad that spring was at hand, and the new hats with their spring colors and flowery trimmings added to the joyousness of the morning. Every face was smiling. From his pulpit among the Easter lilies the preacher began his sermon, and he began well enough. He spoke of the rebirth of nature, of the flowers, and of the promise of the spring, and we were just settling back to enjoy a cheerful, hopeful discourse when he began to dig up gloom. He was but an ordinary preacher, and with such men gloom is a safe and steady standby of pulpit oratory. "Thick gloom and plenty of it," was his motto, and he lived up to it. No doubt he had planned his sermon well, meaning to cast aside the gloom toward the end and send us away happy and hopeful, using the gloom pedal a while merely as a background against which to throw the joyous note of happiness, but he became

so interested in digging into the grave, and did it so well, that by dinner time we were all as gloomy as condemned criminals. We were sad and sober and dejected and hopeless and miserable, and we knew dinner was getting colder all the while, and still the preacher dug gloom and cast it by spadefuls over us. By the time I should have been carving the chicken he was over his head in the grave, and we were all cross and uncomfortable and had absorbed enough gloom to last twelve months. Then he probably realized he had been glooming too long, and that if he did not stop we would quit and go home anyway, and he tried to jump himself out of the grave in one jump. But he was not man enough to do it. He lacked the necessary oratorical leg muscles, and we filed out of the church like a lot of mourners. For us the spring sun no longer shone. We could not even think of new hats. We were squelched and all gloomed up.

Such Easter sermons—and luckily there are many that are as joyous and helpful as this was depressing—are one reason why we celebrate the Festival of Hats rather than Easter. We can celebrate the Festival of Hats in the bright spring sunshine up and down Fifth Avenue, on the country roads, any place where we can find another new-hatted person to look at our new hat. On Easter the churches are crowded, and there are thousands among the congregations that know and feel the full import of Easter Day, but the hundreds of thousands do not celebrate the Festival of Easter at all—they celebrate the Millinery Carnival, the new pagan Festival of Spring Bonnets.

Just as we celebrate Firecracker Day

on the day after the third of July. I have forgotten what the significance of Firecracker Day was originally. I believe we inherited it from the British; at least, I seem to remember that the British had something to do with it. One of our oldest inhabitants tells me he remembers that in his youth it was a day of long drawn-out oratory, and he says he imagines Firecracker Day was established to celebrate the abolition of that particular brand of oratory; but I am not of this opinion. As the day is devoted to the wholesale destruction of small red explosive cylinders made in China, I am of the opinion that the festival of the fourth day of July is in honor of the landing of the Laundry Fathers in San Francisco Bay and the splendid conquest of America by the Chinese laundrymen. The connection of the British with the event seems to be that the British prohibited the trade in opium in China, thus driving the Chinese to our shores, where they have no trouble in getting all the opium desired. Firecracker Day—known also as the Festival of Tetanus, the God of Lockjaw—is therefore our greatest American patriotic festival; and towns and cities are on that day decorated with the American flag, to let all the world know that all men were created free and equal but that the Chinaman is a chink and can't vote.

In December we have the Festival of Scurry and Trash, originally called Christmas. As celebrated in America this festival shows to the fullest the great American characteristics. Every man, woman and child is not only expected to become a spendthrift on this occasion but to worry over the spending. The name "festival" is retained in an ironical sense, the period being one of anxiety and irritation, each trying to live beyond his income.

Perhaps none of our pagan festivals has so far departed from the original church day. The original festival was, as we know, a birthday celebration in honor of the Man, the Redeemer. Gifts were given on this day as an expression of joy and good will. But as celebrated by All-America the original

meaning is lost. Gifts are still given—in fact, the day has become a mere orgy of gift making—but for far different reasons. We give because 1, we received a gift from him or her last Christmas; 2, if we don't the servant will leave; 3, what are we going to do with all the fancy work we make during the year if we don't give it away? 4, because we are afraid he or she will give us something, and how would we feel if we hadn't given him or her something? 5, habit; 6, and only reasonable reason, we like to see the child happy.

The Festival of Scurry (in order to gather together something, no matter what, for every person we are acquainted with) and Trash (which is what nine-tenths of our hard earned Christmas money goes for) is the festival of Extravagance, just as the Festival of Hats is the festival of Vanity and the Festival of Firecrackers is the festival of Bombast.

Another well loved day is the Festival of Gluttony, better known as the Festival of Turkeys. This falls in November, and is supposed to await a proclamation by the President. As a matter of fact, it only awaits the ripening of the cranberries; and when the cranberries come into market and the turkeys are fat no President that ever lived could prevent us giving one day to overeating. Even Theodore could not. Of late years there has been a regrettable tendency in some quarters to deprive the Festival of Turkeys of part of its purely gluttonous meaning. The vegetarians have sought to discredit the turkey, and the Fletcherites have tried to prevent the principal rite of the day, known as "gulping it down"; but as long as the turkey remains the great American bird, symbol of our liberties, and as long as the quick lunch remains our midday meal the American patriot will be true to his flag and continue to gulp down the turkey.

The Festival of Bills falls on January first, the day devoted in ancient times to the god Janus, patron of beginnings and endings. His motto was, "Please settle." In America this is the Festival of Remorse, and was made a holiday in

order that the flood of bills might be postponed one more day. Many of us wish every day might be New Year's Day! Notes cannot be collected on New Year's Day; rent need not be paid; bills need not be settled. Thus practically every American is free from debt on New Year's Day, and yet it is the Festival of Remorse! It is a day of remorse because we know the bills will come in tomorrow, but our remorse is still greater that we ever placed a full holiday in midwinter, when there are no ball games, no golf, no fishing. It is our saddest festival. It arrives just when our first binfuls of coal are gone, when the plumbing freezes, when our bills contracted during the days preceding the Festival of Scurry and Trash are due, and while we are still smarting under the memory that the friend to whom we gave the expensive cut glass dish sent us a merely nominal Christmas souvenir postcard. Our wife expects us to turn over some sort of a new leaf; the famed water wagon stands impatiently champing its bit at our door awaiting our presence aboard—and we notice that it is a taller wagon this year than last and that the inevitable fall from it will be harder and more painful. And this is a festival! I much prefer the Festival of Freedom, or the New Independence Day.

This is held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of some month, the month varying in different States, and was established by our purblind ancestors on the supposition that we would on that day express our will, preference, wish or choice regarding the selection of the persons to misgovern us during the next term. It was then called Election Day. It is now called the Festival of Freedom, because the party bosses have freed us from the task of having any will, preference, wish or choice that amounts to anything. A few men who still retain their childish liking for playing with paper still go to the temple of ballots in the back of the barber shop in Precinct 10, Ward 4, and make a sign resembling a side elevation of a sawbuck in a printed disc resembling a miniature ground plan of a one-ring

circus at the top of a large ink-spoiled piece of paper, fold the paper and put it in a box; but the custom of taking the first train away from home is growing so rapidly that a movement is now on foot to compel the women to do the voting.

By this means many men who are now obliged to take their wives on their Election Day pleasure trips would be assured of a much pleasanter day, for the women would have to stay in town and attend to their voting. When this is accomplished Election Day will indeed be worthy of its name of Festival of Freedom.

Grouped with this Festival of Freedom, and so like it in meaning and mode of celebration that unless a man looks at the calendar he does not know which he is celebrating, are Festival of Freedom No. 2, No. 3, No. 4 and No. 5. As to the origin of these festivals even I am so hopelessly confused that I cannot attempt to tell how they originated nor why nor what they celebrate. They seem to have been established for no reason but to carry out the delightful program of "A Full Day's Pay for a Full Day's Play." The Festival of Freedom No. 2 was, it seems, once called Memorial Day, the present observance of the day leading us to suppose that the thing to be remembered is that we must not go to the office on that day, as the golf season is beginning. No. 3 is said to have been at first a day set aside in honor of Washington—probably Washington, D. C.—but why is not now ascertainable, unless it was because there was once a February 22 in Washington when the weather was fairly passable. No. 4 had at one time some connection with Lincoln (Steffens or Nebraska?) but the connection must have been slight, since it was speedily lost sight of. No. 5 was called Labor Day some years ago, this being short for No-Labor Day, because no one who can avoid it does any labor on that day.

It is my hope in writing this to interest the authorities in a movement for the better celebration of these five Festivals of Freedom. It seems to me that getting a day off is not sufficient

reason for having a festival. There ought to be a living reason—something to bring the festival home to the people, just as the Festival of Hats has kept the interest in the ancient Easter alive. I propose, therefore, that Election Day be perpetuated in a Festival of Shoes. Instead of being a mere memory of a time when men selected their governing officers, the festival would take on a fresh and virile character. Everyone would buy new shoes and walk about in them, admired and admiring. Let us do that, and let us make of the old Memorial Day a Festival of Golf Stockings. Think how bright and cheerful the scene would be if every man, woman and child appeared on that day with bright, new golf stockings! And of Washington Day let us make a Festival

of Coats and Waists, every man buying a new coat and every woman a new waist. Why, it is a grand idea! And make Lincoln Day a Festival of Skirts and Trousers. Everybody appear in brand new skirts or trousers on that day. And on Labor Day we would have a Festival of Lingerie, and everybody would buy new—well, all the rest of the things. I tell you it will be grand—it will be great! We'll all be newly clothed from shoes to hat every year.

I'm going to do it. I'm going to start in next Election Day and buy a pair of new shoes. Over here on Long Island where I live a man doesn't know what he is voting for nor why, but I'll wager I'll know what I am buying shoes for. Yes, sir—to keep my feet off the ground!



THEN AND NOW

By Francis Livingston

THEN the lovelorn maiden fair,
 When the chance presented,
 Down the turret's winding stair,
 Owl and bat frequented,
 Out into the moonlit air
 To her lover waiting there
 Fled, and then repented.

Now the maiden does not spend
 Any time in moping;
 Neither does she have to end
 All her youth in hoping.
 What she does is just to send
 Out a wireless, and her friend
 Takes her aeroloping.

THREE RUSTY KEYS

By William Hamilton Osborne

MRS. MORTIMER ST. JOHN, glancing in her mirror with complacent satisfaction at the counterfeit presentment of her bare white arms and her slender and beautifully molded neck, came to the instant decision that nature well adorned is nature at its best.

It had come upon her like a flash that the rubies would set off her style of beauty to the queen's taste. The rubies! She made a little grimace at herself as she thought of them. They had belonged to her first husband, Jack Surges—and no memories of her first husband were particularly pleasing.

"Of the dead *say* nothing but good," murmured Mrs. Mortimer St. John; "but," she added quite pleasantly, "you may *think* anything you please."

She left her dressing room, passed through her bath—a luxurious affair with its tremendous white marble tank sunk deep in the white marble floor—and entered another room beyond.

This other room was a long, narrow apartment, devoid of furniture or ornament. Along its sides were rows upon rows of hooks and hangers and rows upon rows of lingerie. But its distinguishing feature was the safe at the farther end, a big black bulky strongbox set on wheels, with, it is true, the conventional combination, but on the whole an affair of the vintage of some thirty years gone by.

Mrs. St. John, entering this room, closed and locked the door behind her. Why she locked the door she did not know. It was her invariable custom. Mrs. Mortimer St. John was secretive—either naturally so, or because possibly the profligate and spendthrift habits of

her first husband had made her so. That gentleman in his lifetime had observed the custom when about to start off on a debauch, or when returning from one, of replenishing his depleted purse by any means. True, the occasion of her caution had departed, but she still clung, without knowing it perhaps, to the habit of keeping her most precious possessions and her innermost thoughts—her soul very much to herself. So unconscious was she in all this that no one suspected it. She successfully covered up even her secretiveness. Even Mortimer, her living husband, never suspected this quality of hers.

She knelt down on a bath rug before the bulky safe, and as she did so she experienced the odd feeling of being watched. It is well enough to say that she always had this feeling when she knelt before her safe, but something had deepened it on this particular occasion.

She rose hastily and in some alarm, and went back to the door of the room—there was only one—and turned the knob to make sure that it was locked. She peered cautiously behind the draperies hung along the wall, then, satisfied, she went back to the safe. Hastily she operated the combination, swung back the iron door, and then, with a slender key that she had been holding in the hollow of her hand, she unlocked a small steel compartment in the interior of the safe. Groping there for an instant, she finally drew forth a morocco leather case. Opening the case, she took out the jewels. Her movements were as methodical as usual. She placed the case back in the compartment, locked the compartment, shut the iron

door of the safe and locked that, too, with her customary twirl of the combination handle, making quite sure it was securely shut. Then, with a very feminine sigh of joy, she turned to a small, plain mirror hanging on the side wall of the room and fastened the necklace deftly about her white and slender neck.

"They make all the difference in the world," she told herself quite emphatically. "It's a wonder I haven't thought of them before."

To make assurance doubly sure, she posed the jewels and her effective neck and shoulders in various attitudes. She took observations of them face to face—sidewise from the left, ditto from the right—not to forget hasty coquettish glances over her shoulders. She was satisfied both with herself and the necklace. The combination was complete.

As for the necklace, it was something more than a necklace; it was of gold, very old, very pure and very yellow; it was heavy and heavily studded at various intervals with rubies of the first water, or the first claret, as Mrs. St. John assured herself. But it was the pendant that gave this necklace, above all others, its *distingué* air. The pendant was unusually heavy, so much so that its very weight was making little red marks upon its wearer's clear white skin. And this pendant was of an unusual Oriental and irregular design. Possibly it was a conventionalized palm leaf, but it looked more than anything else like an inverted interrogation point, very fat and very much filled in. And filled in it unquestionably was with rubies fit to grace a coronet.

And yet its wearer involuntarily shuddered, shuddered with the memory of Mr. Jack Surges, her late first husband, to whom the rubies had belonged; shuddered also with that strange sense that still clung to her of being not alone. So strong was this peculiar fear upon her that she turned on the instant, unlocking the door, and left the room.

Mrs. Mortimer St. John's fear might have deepened had she known that in a sense she had not been alone. She little knew that across the narrow side street

in the third story window of a dingy boarding house a burly individual was sitting—a dingy individual clad in shabby garments and with a week's growth of beard on his face. She little knew that this burly, dingy individual had been watching her through the window of her long and narrow room—little knew that he still sat there at his point of vantage across the way with his eyes glued to an expensive pair of Audemair binoculars—that he had held his opera glasses trained, not upon her, but upon the rubies that lay nestled against the warmth and whiteness of her neck.

Upon regaining her dressing room, Mrs. Mortimer St. John was startled once again. Antoinette, her maid, was standing at the dressing table waiting. Her mistress had finished with her some half-hour before—had sent her away as she always did before opening her safe.

"What are you doing here, Antoinette?" she demanded quite sharply, at the same time involuntarily laying one hand across the ruby pendant of the necklace. "I am fully dressed—I told you so. What are you doing here?"

Antoinette turned a troubled glance toward the entrance of the dressing room.

"It is not I, madame," returned Antoinette; "it is this, that Mr. Russell asked at once to see you."

"Mr. Russell!" exclaimed her mistress. "You mean Mr. Russell Surges?"

"Yes, madame," returned Antoinette; "and it is that he desires to see you here."

"Where is he?" inquired her mistress. "Just without the door," responded Antoinette.

Mrs. Mortimer St. John crossed the room, opened the door, and with one and the same gesture waved Antoinette out and beckoned Mr. Russell Surges in.

He was a well set up young chap, about twenty-four years of age, slender, with piercing black eyes and tonight with a curious and striking pallor on his face.

"Come in, Russell," said Mrs. St. John, and shut the door behind you. What do you want of me?"

He did not answer for an instant, and in that instant she noted how curiously pale he was.

"What is the matter, Russell?" she demanded.

"I had to see you alone," he returned. "Mortimer is downstairs waiting for you, and I did not want to ask you before him. I need a thousand dollars right away, Maisie. I've got to have it, do you understand?"

"A thousand dollars!" repeated Mrs. Mortimer St. John mechanically. "Haven't you got it, Russell?"

"I had more than that," he answered, "but it's gone. I need a thousand more."

"What for?" she demanded.

A dull flush crept up over his pallor and made its way slowly to his forehead. "I can't tell you that, Maisie, but as sure as you're standing there I've got to have it, and I've got to have it tonight."

Mrs. Mortimer St. John closed her eyes for one moment, as she always did when she tried to think hard. When she opened them again she found Russell staring at the rubies on her neck.

"Those—those were Jack's," he whispered hoarsely. "I haven't seen them—I haven't laid eyes on them for years."

She shook her head. "Not since you were a little codger of a boy, Russell," she said tenderly. "It was just a fancy, my wearing them tonight. Russell," she demanded firmly, "why do you need money? Why do you come to me?"

His eyes sought the floor. "Because," he said, "I've got to have it. I can't give you any other explanation. It is something that I can't even tell to Letty. Do you understand?"

She clutched him suddenly by the wrist. Letty was Letty Forrester, her sister, and he was engaged to Letty. She looked him steadily in the eyes. His money, all that he had saved—so he said—was gone. Why? Had his time come? Was the yellow streak that had been part and parcel of his dead brother, Jack Surges, just making its appearance in him? She had brought Russell Surges up from a boy in baby dresses; he had been years younger than his

brother Jack, and she had watched him grow up straight. She was proud of him;—she had engaged her little sister Letty to him, and yet through it all had run a sullen fear that some day Russell Surges would turn bad. That fear now deepened somehow into what seemed to her a certainty.

"Russell," she exclaimed, "you say you have not—you cannot tell me—you cannot tell Letty what your trouble is. Is there then some girl—?"

The flush deepened on Russell Surges's face. He laughed hysterically. "No, no!" he exclaimed in a high voice. "My heavens, no! But won't you trust me, Maisie? I need the money, and I need it—I wish I could tell you how badly I need it—right away. Can't you trust me?"

She relaxed her hold on his wrist and swept across the room to the door that led into the hall.

"Not," she responded firmly, "if you can't trust me."

At the bottom of the broad stairs below she found her husband Mortimer and her sister Letty waiting for her. Her guests, of course, had not yet begun to arrive.

Two days later, in the afternoon, a man, who prided himself upon being a very ordinary-looking man, alighted from a very much battered bicycle in front of the Mortimer St. John residence on the Avenue, hauled his wheel into the areaway with an elaborate assumption of care and then rang the basement door bell. To the maid who answered he removed his hat.

"Man from the hardware store," he announced briefly, "to see about the locks. Mrs. St. John sent word for us to call."

He was ushered into the hall above, where the maid watched him from behind a curtain while she sent another maid to summon her mistress.

Her mistress came at once and ushered the ordinary-looking man into the little den at the end of the hall and shut the door behind her.

The ordinary-looking man glanced about him carefully before he spoke.

Finally he laid a card upon the table, which she read and immediately tossed into the fire.

"I am Crowder," said the man in a low tone of voice, "from headquarters. You are the party, I take it, that called us up."

"Yes," said Mrs. St. John. "I am glad you came."

"It was about the ruby necklace," went on Crowder.

"Yes," said Mrs. St. John.

"Valuable?" asked Crowder.

"Very," answered Mrs. St. John.

"I told your people," said Crowder, "that I was to look at the locks and the window fastenings. I take it they know about this robbery."

Mrs. St. John nodded in the affirmative.

"So, if you don't mind," went on Crowder, "we might make the rounds of the house, which will give me the chance to see the force you've got below stairs, and then we can take a look at the *locus in quo*." They made the rounds of the house.

It was a large old-fashioned brownstone house in the old-fashioned quarter of the city facing the Avenue and on the corner of a side street. Behind it was a bricked-in narrow, well kept backyard. It was the end house of a very fashionable row of brownstone houses, but across the side street, cheek by jowl with it—as is the case in big cities,—were a number of shabby, tumbledown superannuated dwellings of a bygone age.

When Crowder had finished his inspection of the windows, he came back to the front door.

"You say," he remarked, "that this door was standing open late yesterday evening. Am I right?"

"Yes," responded Mrs. St. John.

Crowder whipped from his pocket a round magnifying glass and carefully examined the fastenings.

"It was not forced," he remarked; "that much is sure." He flashed his magnifying glass upon the keyhole for an instant and gave vent to a low whistle, not of surprise at all, but merely indicating that he had acquired informa-

tion, however slight. He closed the front door softly and nodded toward the stairs.

"Now," he said, "I would like to see the safe."

A moment later he was standing with Mrs. St. John in the long, narrow safe room. He glanced distrustfully at the rows of gowns and furs and laces that hung against the walls.

"Bad place for anybody to open a safe," he remarked. "Are you sure there was nobody in the room with you that night?"

"Positive," responded Mrs. St. John.

Crowder shook his head. "I'm not so sure but there's someone with us now," he remarked.

He spent the next few minutes making a thorough examination of the draperies without success.

"Mrs. St. John," he said, "you understand that I don't want to know the combination of your safe, but I wish you would twirl it any old way, while I stand behind some of these fixings and see if I can spot you."

After she had twirled it any old way he came from behind his hiding place shaking his head.

"A man couldn't tell anything about it more than two feet away," he remarked, "so I guess it's no thoroughfare in that direction. Now, would you mind opening her up for fair?"

Mrs. St. John opened up her safe for fair, and once more Crowder, obeying some instinct of his profession, whipped out his magnifying glass and examined the steel compartment within.

"This was not forced, either," he remarked. He trained his glass closely upon the keyhole of this compartment and again he emitted a whistle, a little louder than the first. He turned to the lady.

"Lady," he said, "would you mind letting me see the key that opens this?"

She had it ready and she showed it to him. He started somewhat as he looked at it.

"Now tell me something," he demanded: "has anybody else got a key to this compartment inside this here safe?"

"No one," she replied.

"Anybody know the combination beside yourself?"

"No," she answered.

He stepped to the door—the only door of the narrow little room—and still obeying that instinct, he examined the keyhole of that door.

"Has anybody but yourself a key to this door, lady?" he inquired.

"Yes," she answered; "my husband has. Mr. Mortimer St. John."

"Anybody else?" he queried.

"No one else," she said.

He stepped back to the little window and looked across the street casually as one who would collect his thoughts. He threw up the sash and looked without.

"Not a very pretty sight, lady," he remarked. "Nothing but vacant rooms to let across the way."

As they passed downstairs again Antoinette brushed by them.

"Now as I was saying," Crowder exclaimed for the benefit of Antoinette, "these here patent catch-as-catch-can window fasteners that we put out can't go wrong no ways. If I can make you up a little estimate I will do it right away."

"Come right in here," said Mrs. St. John. And once more they were seated in the little den face to face.

"Lady," said Crowder in a half-whisper, "I don't know what to make of this here, but there's one thing that's sure: the individual that swung this job came into your house with a key, and he opened the door of that room upstairs with a key, and he opened the steel compartment in your safe with a key."

"With these keys?" she demanded, holding out her own little bunch.

"Not with those keys," responded Crowder, "not by a long shot. Those keys is as bright and shiny as though they was just made. The keys this person used had one peculiarity—they was rusty, every one of them."

"Rusty!" gasped Mrs. St. John.

"Yes," said Crowder. "Does that give you any clew?"

She shook her head, and then she in turn asked a question. "Mr. Crowder,"

she said, "was this individual a man, in your opinion, or a woman?"

"I don't know," said Crowder, "but I may be able to tell you when you have told me everything you know—everybody in your house."

When she had finished her recital, although she wisely, or unwisely, refrained from mentioning the demand made upon her by Russell Surges, Crowder slowly shook his head.

"You've got me guessing, Mrs. St. John," he said at length. "Nothing that you have told me seems to help. There are only two things I know—" He paused and held toward her a shining round disk of metal. "I picked this up underneath your safe, Mrs. St. John, he said; 'look at it and tell me what you think it is.'"

Mrs. St. John examined it. It was of the size of a ten-cent piece, apparently of silver and covered with characters of an unusual kind.

"I never saw it before," she responded, "and I don't know what it is."

"I'll tell you what it is," said Crowder; "it's a Moorish coin, and it was probably dropped there by the individual that took that necklace—the individual with three rusty keys."

"Three rusty keys!" repeated Mrs. St. John.

"Three rusty keys," repeated Crowder as he went.

The next day, without consulting headquarters, Mrs. St. John placed the matter confidentially in the hands of a local private detective agency, with instructions to report but not to prosecute.

McGuire, of this concern, reported two days later, not to her but to his chief.

"Chief," he said, "I've reckoned up everybody in the place. Servants all O. K. The little girl, Miss Forrester, all O. K. This here Surges boy seems to be O. K.—or else he covers up his tracks too close for me—" He stopped an instant.

"What about the lady herself?" queried his chief.

"Mrs. St. John?" asked McGuire.

"Sure," replied his chief. "Women

have been known to steal their own stuff before this, haven't they?"

"Well," said McGuire doubtfully, "I think you're wrong. She's got no entangling alliances and she's as straight as a string; but I'm not so sure about Mortimer St. John."

His chief snuffed with some surprise. "Why, what's the matter with him?" he asked.

"Been in a couple of lucky Wall Street deals lately," said McGuire, "and now he has got into an unlucky one—that is, it may turn out that way. He has borrowed all his credit is good for and just a trifle more. I am not through with him—I'll report again. What I wanted to know was just how much of this to tell our client."

It was perhaps a week later that Mrs. St. John met McGuire in the Monolith, an uptown hostelry.

"You sent for me?" she said.

"Yes," replied McGuire; "has anybody followed you?"

"No," she answered.

"Quite sure?" he persisted.

"Quite," she responded.

"I have a taxi waiting at the side entrance," said McGuire. "I wish you would come with me."

They rode for half an hour in silence. At the end of that time they plunged into a side street and alighted before the entrance to a dingy little shop. Over this entrance hung the three gilded balls of the pawnbroker.

In another instant they were seated in a dingy little room at the rear of the shop.

"This man," whispered McGuire to Mrs. St. John, "owes me a good deal. He understands he is not to be prosecuted. It looks like a family matter, and I told him there would be no trouble so far as he was concerned. To tell the truth, he is nothing but a fence—you know what that is?"

Mrs. St. John nodded in the affirmative. The door of the little back room opened and the "fence" entered. He glanced searchingly in the face of McGuire.

"Straight goods?" he queried.

"You have my word," responded McGuire.

The fence laid on the table before the eyes of Mrs. St. John a leather case. She opened it and gasped in surprise. Within it lay the Oriental ruby necklace.

For a long while she did not speak; then, shuddering, she looked toward the man.

"Who—who pawned this?" she demanded.

The pawnbroker looked at McGuire and shook his head. McGuire nodded.

"Show her the others, Pantaneous," he said.

For answer Pantaneous, the pawnbroker, laid two objects beside the necklace. One was a Swiss watch of rare design, and the other was a diamond pin of considerable value.

Mrs. St. John started as she saw them. McGuire smiled. "Do you know these?" he demanded.

"Yes," she returned; "they belong to—"

McGuire stopped her. "Never mind, madam," he said sharply. "Come with me. These articles are safe with Mr. Pantaneous. Come back with me."

In the taxicab he turned an inquiring glance upon her. "The pin and the watch were Russell Surges's?" he queried.

"Yes," she returned reluctantly. "Did he pawn them?"

McGuire gave vent to a baffled laugh. "So far, Pantaneous declines to say who pawned them," he returned.

Half an hour later Mrs. St. John entered the front door of her residence. No sooner had she entered than Antoinette her maid advanced upon her with excited gestures.

"Madame!" she cried. "Miss Letty—it's terrible! She faints and faints—she screams and screams! For one half-hour she screams and then she faints."

"Where is she?" demanded Mrs. St. John.

A faint shriek from above gave answer, and Mrs. St. John hurried to her sister Letty's room.

Letty was in hysterics, with the servants clustered excitedly about her. Mrs.

St. John, with one wave of her hand, brushed them out of the room, locked the door, dashed cold water into Letty's face and, grasping her firmly by her shoulders, brought her very sharply to her senses.

"Letty," she exclaimed, "whatever is the matter?"

Letty took a firm grip upon herself before she answered. She was a slight, pretty little girl and young, not more than nineteen perhaps.

"It all came on top of something about Russell that I couldn't make out," she moaned.

"What about Russell?" demanded her sister.

"I don't know," groaned Letty, "but somehow for days he has been different—depressed—like a different man. He has acted as though somebody stronger than himself had some kind of a hold upon him. There is something that he dare not tell—something that he hides."

"So," commented Mrs. St. John, "you have noticed that, too. Go on."

"What happened this afternoon," went on Letty, trembling, "came on top of it all, or I would not have broken down."

"What happened this afternoon?" demanded Mrs. St. John excitedly.

Letty seized a wet cloth and pressed it to her temples. Then she looked her sister squarely in the eyes.

"I saw a man unlock the front door and come into the house," she said.

Mrs. St. John's heart stood still. "What man?" she exclaimed.

"The man with the limp," returned her sister.

"What else?" queried Mrs. St. John. "What did he look like? Quick!"

"He had a beard" returned Letty, "a Vandyke beard."

"His clothes?" demanded Mrs. St. John.

"He was very well dressed," said Letty.

"Go on," exclaimed her sister; "what did he do? Did he come in?"

"He came in with a key," said Letty in a whisper. "I was standing in the little room at the end of the hall down-

stairs. I heard the rattling of the lock—there was nobody about but me. The door was pushed open and he came in, limping as he came. He got as far as the hall table. You know our silver salver there—he took it up; then he looked up and saw me—"

"What then?" demanded Mrs. Mortimer St. John.

"He stared at me for a moment," said Letty, "and then he turned slowly, very slowly, and dropped the salver back upon the table and limped out, shutting the door behind him."

Mrs. Mortimer St. John fairly shook Letty in her unwonted excitement. "Did you know him, Letty?" she demanded. "Had you ever seen him before?"

Letty vigorously shook her head. "I had never seen him," she returned. "I did not know him."

"Letty," demanded her sister suddenly, "look at me. Are you quite sure that it was not Russell Surges in disguise?"

Letty was silent for a moment. "Why do you ask me that?" she queried, almost sullenly.

"I don't know why I ask it," responded Mrs. St. John.

"It was not Russell Surges," answered Letty evenly.

Three minutes later Mrs. St. John was peering at the front door through a little magnifying glass. When she had finished her inspection she drew her finger down across the keyhole. It came away covered with a few specks of brown rust.

Mortimer St. John did not reach home until after midnight. In fact, it was after two o'clock in the morning when he entered. Mrs. St. John heard him enter, heard him go directly up the stairs and go directly to his room, heard him do what he usually never did—lock himself in.

Obedying some impulse, she went to his door and tapped upon it.

"Everything all right, Morty?" she queried.

He came to the door and answered her, but did not open it and did not un-

lock it. "A hard day, that's all," he said. "Market went a bit wrong, but I guess I'm safe."

"Oh," she said, from her side of the door, "I didn't know there was any danger."

"There isn't any real danger," he replied. "Good night."

Mrs. St. John crept back to her room and lay awake all night. At times she heard, or thought she heard, odd noises as of some person coming up or going downstairs. Each time she knew she was mistaken, but there was one thing in which she was not mistaken. All through the night her husband Mortimer was pacing up and down, up and down his room. It was barely possible that the Street had hit him harder than any one suspected.

She fell asleep toward morning, and when she awoke Mortimer St. John had gone.

It was on that afternoon, in her absence, that the gold jewel case—a valuable antique—disappeared from her dressing table. It was the next morning that McGuire reported to her that Pantaneous had this jewel case also and had suddenly become unusually defiant.

McGuire saw Letty Forrester and got her description of the man who had unlocked the door the day before.

"There is one thing, miss, that I would like to know," he said. "You say this man was limping. Did he put it on—did it seem to you that this limp was assumed?"

Letty shook her head. "It seemed to me quite natural," she said.

McGuire turned back to Mrs. St. John. "Do you know anybody with a limp?" he asked.

She ransacked her memory. "No one," she replied.

"Well," said McGuire, "I've given Pantaneous forty-eight hours to tell me what he knows. There is one thing, Mrs. St. John, that he knows—and I'm sure he knows—that Russell Surges had a hand in this."

"It can't be possible," exclaimed Letty Forrester.

McGuire smiled grimly. "It is possible," he returned, "because I saw Rus-

sell Surges leaving Pantaneous's place by the side door yesterday—he was alone."

That night Mortimer St. John repeated his procedure of the night before. He arrived home at exactly half past two, entered by means of his latch key and ascended to his room and locked himself in.

The next night he did the same. He had done this for five nights in succession, quite as a matter of course and without offering the slightest plausible explanation of his conduct.

McGuire reported to his chief—but not to Mrs. Mortimer St. John, for the time had not arrived—that Mortimer and Russell Surges, heretofore on not a remarkably friendly basis, were spending night after night at the Iroquois Club in each other's society.

Crowder, of headquarters, whose duty was to the people quite as much as to Mrs. Mortimer St. John, had not as yet located the booty as McGuire had done, and there was a reason for it. If there was one man more cunning in the town than Crowder, it was Pantaneous. But Crowder was interested. He had other cases besides the case of Mrs. St. John's jewels to consider, but her case held an interest that the daily routine of his duties did not, and it was Crowder who telephoned her one afternoon in haste.

"I've got your man, lady," he exclaimed.

"What man?" she demanded.

"The man with the rusty keys," he returned gleefully over the telephone.

"What kind of a man?" she asked.

"I do not know," replied Crowder.

"I haven't seen him yet."

"Where is he?" she exclaimed

Crowder smiled to himself. "*He is somewhere in your house,*" he replied.

It was only Crowder's calm voice that saved Mrs. St. John from hysterics.

"Off and on," said Crowder, "when we could spare the time, our men have watched your place. They are watching now, and they saw him enter. He can't get out unless they nab him. Have you seen him yet?"

"No," gasped Mrs. St. John.

"He's there all right," returned Crowder; "and I don't want you to take any chances, but when my men ring I wish you would see to them yourself."

Crowder rang off, and almost at that instant Mrs. St. John heard the tinkle of the doorbell down below. She had a considerable amount of physical courage and it was broad daylight, and yet from every corner that she passed it seemed to her that some unseen hand stretched itself toward her throat, as though the muzzle of a pistol were placed against her breast.

It seemed an age before she reached the hall below, an age before she grasped the doorknob and opened wide the door. A man stood on the threshold facing her. The man was Russell Surges. He said not a word to her, but quick as a flash darted into the reception room upon the right and scanned it. He retraced his footsteps and looked into the music room. Then he turned toward her.

"Maisie," he said, "leave me alone. You go upstairs."

"No," she said, "I stay here."

Russell beckoned with his right arm into the depths of the music room, and suddenly a man darted from that room in answer and ran crookedly along the hall toward the den at the rear—a man with a decided limp.

Russell followed him. Mrs. St. John was dimly conscious that a man—probably one of Crowder's men—was coming up the front porch. The door was opened behind her—fear had departed from her. She rushed toward the disappearing figures, calling out to Russell Surges to wait for her—when suddenly her arm was seized from behind and she turned to face Mortimer St. John, her husband.

"Leave those two alone," he muttered savagely. "Leave them alone. Do you understand? I'll take care of them."

"I'll not leave them alone," she replied, without having the slightest idea as to what she was going to do.

St. John drew her toward the foot of the stairs. "You come with me, Maisie," he exclaimed.

"No," she replied.

At that instant there was another hurried ring at the doorbell—for St. John had closed the door behind him. She darted from him and opened the door once more.

There at last stood Crowder with two of his men. She waved them wildly, hysterically, toward the den at the rear of the hall, the door of which was closed and locked.

"He's in there," she cried excitedly. "In there—the burglar—the thief. In there."

Crowder and his men started for the den. Mortimer St. John blocked their way.

"Keep out of there," he cried. "This is my affair, not yours."

Crowder stopped in his tracks and looked at Mr. Mortimer St. John. "This is the people's affair," he returned, keeping his eyes on Mortimer's wife. "We've been brought into this for the benefit of the public, and the man we're after is in there and we're going to get him. Right, Mrs. St. John?"

"Yes," said she, "you are right, Mr. Crowder."

Mortimer St. John once more seized her by the wrist. "You come with me, Maisie," he exclaimed.

Crowder and his men knocked at the door of the den. There was no response.

"If you don't let us in," said Crowder, "we'll break in. Do you understand?"

Still there was no response. Crowder held his pistol against the door and cocked it. It was a sound that those within must have recognized, for immediately the door was thrown back and Russell Surges faced them. Crowder's two men seized the other individual and searched him. He was guiltless of weapon, but he possessed a very considerable roll of bills; and when they drew these forth there came with them three very dingy-looking objects. Crowder seized them and laid them triumphantly side by side upon the table. They were three very rusty keys.

"You're my man," said Crowder.

The well dressed man with the Vandike beard slumped back into a chair and stuck his hands into his armpits.

"I guess I am," he answered coolly.

"You took the ruby necklace," continued Crowder threateningly.

"I did," responded the other, "and what of it?"

Crowder shot a glance of satisfaction toward his two men. "You will recall that he confessed," he stated.

They nodded and tucked the fact away in the back portion of their craniums.

"Now, my man," said Crowder, "I guess you will have to come with us."

"Not on your life," responded the man with the Vandyke beard. "Why should I go with you?"

"Because," said Crowder very politely, "you have just told us that you stole a necklace."

"I have told you nothing of the kind," responded the other. "I told you that I took a necklace, which is quite a different thing."

"How different?" asked Crowder.

The man with the Vandyke beard shook his finger toward Russell Surges, who stood with his back against the door.

"You ask him what's the difference. He will tell you whether I stole the necklace," he responded.

They turned to Russell Surges. That unusual pallor was again upon his face. He shook his head vigorously.

"Don't ask me," he groaned; "don't. And don't arrest him; he didn't steal anything. Go away and leave us. Go away."

For answer Crowder pushed him violently aside, opened the door and called to the mistress of the house. She heard him, and despite all efforts of her husband, she came.

At the door she stood transfixed, staring at the figure in the chair—the man with the Vandyke beard—but she did not faint.

"Jack Surges!" she exclaimed.

"Ah!" said the man with the Vandyke. "Now we've got it straight. Now you will tell them that I did not steal that Algerian necklace, won't you Maisie, girl?"

Still Mrs. Mortimer St. John did not faint. Perhaps the two calmest people in the room were the man with the Vandyke beard and herself.

"I thought you were dead years ago, Jack Surges," she exclaimed.

"So you did," he responded—"so you did, and yet you see I am not; and you'll understand that a man has got a right to come back from Africa and come into his own house with his own keys and open his own safe and take out his own necklace. You understand that, don't you?"

"I understand," returned Mrs. St. John, quite unaware that Mortimer St. John was standing behind her with beads of sweat standing out upon his forehead, "I understand, Jack, that you had a right to take the necklace. It was yours. You can keep it. You had a right to take the jewel case—you can keep that, too, but you have taken nothing else you had a right to take."

"Oh, I haven't, haven't I?" he returned. "I had a right to fetch up with my own brother, didn't I?" He hardly knew me when he saw me. I got pretty shabby, Maisie, lately, and I got this bad leg in a row in Tangiers, but I soon made Russell step up to the captain's office and settle. He figured out he didn't want you to know, and I soon made your husband Mortimer cave in. He figured out he didn't know what to do just yet, and I made up my mind that Jack Surges could do pretty much as he pleased around his own place, seeing he was your husband—seeing you were my wife."

Mrs. Mortimer St. John actually smiled. "You are not my husband, Jack," she said. "I divorced you two years after you ran away."

"What!" cried Surges.

"What!" cried his younger brother.

In the doorway Mortimer said nothing, but took out his handkerchief and wiped his brow. For the rest of the interview he leaned weakly, but gratefully, against the doorpost.

"Yes," went on Mrs. St. John; "nobody knew, but I divorced you and served you by publication."

"I never got any notice," said Surges.

"Oh," replied his former wife, "notice was sent you at your last address, Mr. Surges, and you were properly brought into court. You see, I know

the vernacular—all according to law. I got my divorce right here where I belong, and you may rest assured that that divorce is as good as gold."

Surges was now upon his feet. "Then you can all get out," he cried. "Get out of *my house*. I own this house, just as I owned that necklace," he went on, "so you can all of you get out, from Maisie down to little Letty, that saw me the other day for the first time in thirteen years and didn't know me. Get out, do you hear? St. John, you get out first."

But Mrs. Mortimer St. John still did not faint. She stepped to within three feet of the renegade Surges and her smile widened.

"When I got my divorce, Mr. Jack Surges," she went on, "I also got a decree allowing permanent alimony. The alimony rolled up in the course of

time, and I had the sheriff very quietly sell this house under the decree, and I bought it in. But you are still in arrears—you are in contempt of court. Mr. Surges," she went on, "when you have paid back the blackmail that you have got from Russell Surges—when you have undone all that you have tried to do—and Mr. Crowder will see to it that you do—"

"I certainly shall, ma'am," replied Crowder.

"When you have done all that," repeated Mrs. Mortimer St. John, "I think, Mr. Surges, that you had better go back to Africa for the benefit of your health. It is cooler there than it will be here—for you."

And it is to be noted in the course of time that Mr. Jack Surges took her good advice. He went.



MIRAGE

By Caroline Reynolds

YOUTH is a dream of tomorrow's hope,
 Finding a charm in each newborn day,
 Gazing with shy and beseeching eyes,
 Striving to fathom the far-away.
 Ever the bliss of the unfulfilled,
 Ever a dream of the days to come;
 Joy that we never have known is best,
 Love that is deepest is ever dumb.

Age—it is naught but a memory,
 Tear-misted dreams of a day long dead,
 Tender regrets for the things that were,
 Fast fading letters, a rose once red.
 Tasting the fruit of fulfilled desire,
 Living again in the phantom past;
 Tears for the dreams that could not come true,
 Tears for the love that could never last.

Youth is the theme of a book unread;
 Age is the dream of a day long dead.

EVOLUTION OF A FAIR MAID

By Charles C. Mullin

AT TWELVE—"I sha'n't do everything you command; you're only my maid!"

AT FIFTEEN—"I will show you I have a little independence of my own! Besides, you're only my stepfather!"

AT SIXTEEN—"A girl of my age should not take such talk from anyone, not even from you, mother!"

AT EIGHTEEN—"Harold, you have no control over my actions; you are only my fiancé!"

AT TWENTY—"You are only— Oh, I wish I was back with father and mother!"



A DILEMMA

By Louis Schneider

TWIXT Grace and Sue I wavered long,
But now I know
That on sweet Sue my choice is fixed—
'Tis truly so!

Still—I'm in such a quandary
I'm fairly blue:
If Sue should grace my home I fear
That Grace will sue!



THE grain of truth does not thrive on showers of flattery.

THE FATHERLESS, THE WIDOW AND MR. DELANCY

By Forrest Halsey

"DAYLIGHT," said Mr. Delancy wearily to the sunshine which had awakened him, "is like a woman in love at the telephone—always calling you up at inconvenient times." Yawning, he sat up and threw back the bedclothes. Then he sank down again.

"How pleasant it would be if Nature showed more originality," he murmured drowsily. "For instance, daylight always comes in the morning. Now if once in a while it came in the afternoon or at night, what—a—relief—it—would—be!" He slept.

The disparaged morning hours dragged slowly away. Creditors knocked discreetly at the outer door or banged harshly, according to the length of their bills and the shortness of their patience. But no creditors' knocks ever broke Delancy's slumbers. He said that creditors were like gray hairs: a man worries over the first few, but with a large crop he becomes resigned. Thus he slept while dimly through his slumbers reverberated the cannonading of the great duns, that lullaby of the man who travels short on the long road of pleasure. The fists banged the door and grew weary and sore, as did their owners. The bell of the telephone whirled like an angry bee against the muffling of a silk handkerchief. Nature tossed handfuls of her prodigal gold through the open windows, splashed it across his rugs and tossed it among the cards and empty glasses on his table as if she had come to join in the game and found it abandoned. She threw a great shower of it upon the sleeping man and awakened him, as if to show him that the gold of the dice might

have vanished, but that gamblers' gold was not the only gold in the world. But Mr. Delancy gazed at the yellow hoard without emotion, since it was not acceptable to bartenders.

He painfully hauled himself into a sitting posture, bent his head attentively and listened.

"That is a new collector for my collection," he murmured as he hauled his protesting body from the bed. Then his eyes brightened. He had seen a large heap of mail his janitor valet had placed among the cigarette stumps beneath the reading lamp.

"I must renew my stamp book," said Mr. Delancy.

He opened the angry missives and laid aside the stamped envelopes trustingly enclosed to contain the cheque by return mail. When he had steamed off the stamps, the pernicious habit of the United States post office of doing business on a cash basis would hold no terrors for Mr. Delancy. All his mail was not of this order; neither was it as satisfactory. He frowned as he fed the fire with pitiful notes from millionaires who had not a cent upon which they could lay their hands, carefully engraved invitations from ladies with foreign names who wished to form circles composed of only the most select ladies and gentlemen, who, while making each other's acquaintance, could be introduced into the innocent mysteries of smoking the hookah. From his hands to the flames fluttered the cards of ladies who informed him that they scorned to polish any but the most fashionable of finger nails. The fire devoured little

scented notes from other ladies who had seen his name in the papers and yearned to tell him their troubles; it licked hungrily at other notes, the writers of which having told him their troubles now informed him that they had more of a kind that could be confided only to a lawyer. And lastly the room was lit by a roaring, flaming mass of bills, bills that ran through all the sonata of debt from the allegro of "Please remit" to the furious finale of "Our lawyer informs us." The last missive of all caused his eyes to glisten with hope.

"My dear sister," he said.

"I have no money to lend," said the letter firmly. "And I cannot permit you to see or write to me again. As a Christian I cannot find it in my heart to forgive your way of life, and as a mother I cannot subject my innocent son to the contamination of your presence. I will pray for you as long as you continue to deserve it. I will ask the Lord to show you the error of your ways, but from past experience I know it will be hopeless."

And there was the formal signature—"Olivia Winterfrost."

Again the fire sprang into life. Delancy leaned heavily against the mantel shelf and gazed down at the dull black mass that smothered the coals.

"I fear," he said, "that the beautiful text which isn't in the Bible, 'the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb' should read, 'The wind is tempted by the shorn lamb'."

"Oliver—Uncle Oliver—open the door!" shouted an excited voice.

Languidly picking up a hand mirror, Delancy strolled softly into the outer room and raised the hand glass high above his head until he saw in it through the transom into the hall. Then he put down the mirror, hurried to the door and unlocked it.

"Come in, Jim," he said. "What's the matter?"

A woebegone person with a man's physique and a boy's years, staggered into the room, crying:

"Oh, Uncle Oliver, I'm in a hell of a lot of trouble!"

Delancy carefully locked the door, led

the way to the bedroom, turned on the bath, lit a cigarette, puffed, held out his hand, frowned at its trembling and said wearily:

"What is her name?"

The youth crumpled onto the crumpled bed and clutched his hair. "I'll never be able to face mother again," he wailed.

"Neither will I," thought Delancy. "Have you had your breakfast?" he inquired as he untied his bathrobe.

"No; I can't eat."

Delancy pressed the bell.

"The first rule in life, son," he said, "is that trouble and liquor are at their worst on an empty stomach."

"I'm done for!"

"Nonsense, my lad. Trouble is like a bill collector, bound to knock on your door; but that is no reason for your inviting it in and giving it a chair."

The boy groaned.

"Buck up," said Delancy, "and tell me what it is while I take my bath; and I'll tell you how we'll get out of it while we have breakfast. Take your hand off that brandy bottle. Liquor should never be taken as a chaser to trouble. Cheer up." He hit the lad a resounding blow on the shoulder. "Nothing is so bad it can't be mended. There is a divorce coupon on every marriage certificate nowadays."

The lad raised his miserable face, a faint hope in his eyes. "Oh, Uncle Oliver, I've been such a fool!" he bleated.

"That's fine."

"What do you mean?"

"My lad, it is not only in Heaven that the entrance of the lost sheep is greeted by applause. Still," he added thoughtfully, "in my belief the joy in Heaven over the return of the lost sheep is caused by the fact that there is a new past to talk about. There must be a fearful dearth of conversation in Heaven, since good people can talk of nothing but bad ones."

"There is no chance of squaring this, I tell you," the youth groaned.

"Nonsense," said Oliver Delancy. He always said "Nonsense" in cases like this. He found it helped him to bear other peoples' troubles to say it.

An hour later the group who waited in the hall were stricken speechless by his sudden appearance among them. There was such a cold air of business about his majestic entrance that for a moment they were dazed. But only for a moment. Still he parted them with such an air of authority, and also the supersense of the collector having informed them that the son of his wealthy sister was within, they only recovered in time to see him enter a taxicab. And the recovery was then too late.

Mr. Delancy did not approve of taxicabs. The race of cold-faced, iron-hearted young mechanics that was gradually replacing the convivial criminals of the hansoms was distasteful to him. Also he said that it seemed inhuman to be robbed by a machine. Cabmen had always succeeded very well in their crimes without calling on machines to help them. Then, too, a gentleman's powers of persuasion were wasted on a machine. He sighed heavily as he noted the vast number of taxis filling the streets through which he was passing. The days when a gentleman could enter a cab anywhere between the Flatiron and the Circle and charge the bill to his personal appearance were plainly almost over.

"The fool that said that science was the chief aid to comfort was a liar," he reflected bitterly as he paid good money into the oil-stained glove held out for it at the ferry.

The sunlight was bright on the waters of the river. Each skyscraper that slid by the ferry boat was cut as sharply against the sky as if some gigantic infant playing at cutting out papers had pasted it on the blue.

"Now why did I mix in this?" asked the traveler reproachfully of the receding city. "It's that fatal habit of mine of being good-natured. I wish I could get over it. It makes one so unpopular."

The boat drew into the slip.

"One thing is certain," he added as he crossed the bridge to the station: "not one drink for me; it would be fatal. But heavens, think of facing Olivia without one!"

"But not one for mine. If she should detect even the odor of sanctity about me she would be sure I had been drinking. Not a drink!"

He repeated "Not a drink" as he passed the station café; he said it again to the astonishment of the official who told him his train did not go for half an hour; he chanted it as he walked the waiting room while women sent their husbands to tell the policeman that they wished protection from him as a crazy man. Why is it that women always send their husbands blocks away from danger to ask protection, while personally they remain close to the threatened peril, or follow it if it tries to escape from their vicinity? Delancy, however, did not notice that he had created any excitement. He was used to it.

The wide, brown meadow flats, edged by a far thin, bright thread of river, were skimming by the car window before Delancy drew a breath of relief.

"Now," he said, "the danger is over. I know that such a mother as Olivia lives miles from a drink. What the deuce can I say to her, even if she consents to see me? I will undoubtedly make matters worse. I am not a diplomat unless I owe somebody money," he sighed. "I can't talk to people any more unless they have an unpaid bill in their pockets. And Olivia does not wear pockets. And if she did there would be no bill of mine in them. I am a fool. I never saw such a dry looking country in my life. The whole land looks as if it were dying for a drink. Not a drink—not a drink; the merest sip would be fatal to the poor lad—and to me. There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, but there's many a fall if it gets there."

Olivia did live miles from a drink. But the station did not. Delancy counted five saloons before he got into his hack, and every time he counted he said, "Not a drink." He repeated it vehemently every time the ancient vehicle passed a pair of bifurcated doors. Then he closed his eyes and repeated it exultantly. He was getting to like the sound.

The vehicle paused. Mr. Delancy

opened his lids. "What are you stopping for?" he demanded of the back of a hat from under which streamed whiskers.

"This is the best place," wandered back in a gentle old voice.

"The best place for what?"

"Fer a drink. Ain't you ben groanin, fer one all the way from the station?"

"Drive on!" Delancy's shout scared the horse into a gallop. He was furious, ready to drive his fist between the flowing whiskers.

"Drive back," he said in an altered voice. It had suddenly occurred to him that to expose himself to the icy Olivia without some brandy would be not only dangerous but suicidal.

The hack turned.

"I must have just one or I never will be able to face her," he said as he descended. "Ancient Mariner, come and have a drink with me."

"Well, as it's gettin' kinder cold I guess I better had take just one," said the Ancient Mariner.

Some time later an aged gentleman in whiskers emerged from the portals of the stopping place and mounted his hack. Singing loudly, "The old time religion is good enough for me," he drove into a butcher shop, from which he was removed to jail.

Meanwhile, within the hostelry, a large crowd was greeting with cheers and tears the completion of an eloquent and touching speech on "a mother's love."

Thinking the applause and tears a proper finale for his exit, and dreading an anti-climax, Delancy withdrew.

But when he reached the street there was no hack.

In the distance the crowd was accompanying a policeman, who was accompanying a drunken gentleman to jail.

"That," cried Mr. Delancy in disdain, "that is disgusting—so animal." A small boy paused and regarded him. "I mean brutal. Look at it—a poor man dragged through the streets of a free city by the brutes of the law. It's outrageous!" A second small boy paused. "And I think I will mix in in

the name of freedom. Where is my hack?"

He glared about; then his face became stern and hard.

"My carriage and horse have been stolen. I shall report the matter to the police." He lowered his eyes to the two small, gaping faces. "You stole my horse," he cried, and grabbed for them.

But they eluded him and fled.

Mr. Delancy started to report the crime.

His first attempt to do this was not what might be termed an unqualified success, for seeing two green lights he reported his loss in a drug store. However, he explained to the bewildered clerk the penalty of the law which is provided for those who, having green lights in their windows, are not police stations, and withdrew, leaving a conviction in the wretched clerk's mind that he would shortly be served with papers for the crime. This conviction did not long survive the majestic departure of the exponent of the law, and was soon replaced in the clerk's mind by another, which was that his caller's mind had been unhinged by the theft of his horses, of which he had tried to complain. He thought he would tell the fellows in the back room about it. He told them.

"It is very strange," said Mr. Delancy, coming to a halt after some unconsidered hours, "very strange indeed that there are no police stations." To the unprejudiced observer it might not have seemed so very strange, as there were nothing but cornfields in sight, except where the road ran straight into the setting sun.

"There is one peculiarity about police stations"—Mr. Delancy addressed a beautiful young Greek god on a large sign which announced that the god's clothes cost only twelve fifty—"and that is that when you want them they are not there, and when you don't want them there they are, and so are you. I wonder where one is? I must inquire of someone." His eyes caught sight of a man dancing in a field. "I will inquire of him."

Mr. Delancy climbed through the fence.

The man did not cease his dancing as Delancy approached. He did not cease as Delancy paused before him and bowed.

"Pardon," said the courteous one; "can you tell me where there may be a police station?"

The man continued to dance.

"I have been robbed of two horses and a carriage."

The man danced on.

Mr. Delancy looked hurt. Evidently the dancing gentleman thought his loss unimportant.

"I have also been robbed of my nephew."

The gentleman danced more joyously than ever.

"You have no heart. Take that!" said Mr. Delancy sadly, and struck out.

He struck the man, but lost his balance. The world whirled about him. Oblivion fell on him. And he was no more.

He opened his eyes on a gray world all a rime and glitter of moonlit frost. Over the cornfields a moon like the rind of a lemon cut by an expert bartender floated in the dark sky. Before him was a tall scarecrow, its tattered garments dancing in the night wind.

Suddenly there were two scarecrows.

He looked at the moon. There were two moons.

He sprang to his feet. "There is too much of everything. I must go home," said Mr. Delancy.

He crawled through the fence and stood in the dim road.

"But I have no home," he said sadly. "My nephew has no home," he mourned. "No home!" he screamed at the top of his voice.

And then somebody threw a rock at him.

He ducked and gazed at the side of the road. A little old man, about a foot high, in tattered clothes and long whiskers danced and screamed: "He's got 'em again!"

"My God!" cried Delancy. "And out in the wilderness, too!"

"He's got 'em again," screamed shrill

voices from every side. The air was filled with flying rocks. The ground swarmed with angry little men. Delancy fled through the flying rocks.

He had not gone far before he paused, frowned and turned about. There were no little men. He looked at the moon. There was only one moon.

"As I thought," said Mr. Delancy. He gazed over the cold fields.

"But," he said mournfully, "where is Olivia?"

"Olivia!" he called. But Olivia did not answer.

Shaking his head, he walked onward. At the rise of the hill he saw a lighted house.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Now I shall find Olivia." He took off his hat, baring his head to the night. "And when I find her, what shall I tell her? I am sure I had something to tell her. What was it I was going to tell her anyway? On second thought, I think I would rather find the police station."

"He's got 'em again!" shrieked a wind of malevolent voices behind him. A whirl of rocks flew by his ears. The road pattered with little feet. He fled.

After him pattered the pursuit. The night was full of cries, of hurled rocks, of yelling little figures that tried to trip him. He reached the house, tore open the door, jumped through it and turned to confront a circle of startled faces lit by the fires of a forge. "Help!" he cried. "Help!"

"What's the matter?" demanded many voices.

"Robbers," gasped Delancy.

"Here, take a drink. You look all shook to pieces," said a giant in an apron as he held out a flask.

Mr. Delancy took a drink. Murmurs of sympathy rose as they noted how his hands trembled. "Feel better now?" asked the giant in the apron.

"Much." Delancy's eyes kindled. "But I had a narrow escape."

"Where did you meet 'em?"

"Down the road. And they chased me right up to this door, hurling rocks at me."

The blacksmith's huge chest dilated

with wrath; his blue eyes were like the points of swords. He shook his great naked arm loaded with vast muscle. "I'll git my gun an' fix 'em. I'll show the dummed skunks." He was superb, magnificent, a god of battle, a Woden, a picture of might, protection and wrath bathed in the red light of the flames. A strong man in anger is the noblest sight on God's earth.

"Wait," he bellowed, and strode through the back door into a living room.

Mr. Delancy took another drink.

Cries came from the group in the forge light. "Ain't it terrible?" . . . "Gus 'll fix 'em." . . . "Gus ain't afraid of nothin'."

The door to the living room opened. The mighty Gus entered. "My wife won't lemme have the gun," he said in a fretful tone.

"I don't think you had oughter go without it, Gus," said an aged patriarch hopefully.

"I bet it's them horse thieves th' town's all het up about," added a second patriarch.

"They stole a team from a poor stranger an' he went outer his mind from the loss."

"Yes," cried a youth, "he went into Riggs's drug store and attackted Willie Rink, thinkin' Willie was the robbers. Willie says he fit him all over the plact before he got him down."

"Gentleman," cried Delancy in agony, "they have stolen my poor nephew."

"What!" . . . "Kidnapped 'em?" . . . "Ain't it somethin' fierce?"

"My poor nephew—his mother will never get over it."

"Who's his mother?"

"Mrs. Winterfrost—Olivia Delancy Winterfrost."

Cries of rage and pity resounded, rage at the kidnappers, pity for the poor mother.

"What!" cried the war god. "Not that rich lady who's just built that big house on Cobb's Hill?"

"The same."

"How old's your nephew?"

"Twenty-one—"

Cries of surprise from the group.

"—months."

Cries of pity from the group.

"Think o' the poor kid cryin' fer its mother in the arms of them villains!" mourned the first patriarch.

This struck Delancy as fearful. "Gentlemen," he cried, "if you are men you will follow me! That poor child cries to you for help; its mother cries to you for help; I cry to you for help! Think of those mother tears! Think of that mother heart that is now breaking as it calls to you! In the names of your wives and children—by the tears your mothers have shed on your cradles—follow me!"

A screaming cheer broke from the crowd. The huge smith whirled his hammer aloft as he shouted:

"Come on, boys! Lynch the kidnappers an' horse thieves!"

"Gus Lowerbrow, put down that hammer," said a small female person.

The war god hesitated. He tried to hit a fly with the hammer as if that was what he was waving it for anyway. The group shifted uneasily.

"Are you going to desert me?" cried Delancy.

"Hush," whispered the war god. "I'll slip out the back door an' meet you at the fence corner."

"You'll not leave this house," said the small female person. The conjugal wireless by which a woman can read her husband's thoughts and forbid them is simply wonderful.

"Madam, have you a mother's heart?" demanded Delancy.

"Yes, an' I got what every mother oughter have—I got a husband. An' you sha'n't lead him into no trouble. Besides, while you men was hollerin' I telephoned for the polict, an' there's a patrol wagon full of 'em comin'. An' what's more, I never heard that Mis' Winterfrost had no twenty-months-old son. I thought the only one she had was to college."

Mr. Delancy's hurt look changed to one of surprise, then to a puzzled expression, then to one of hauteur.

"Madam," he said coldly but in a puzzled voice, "this is a family matter that I must ask you not to discuss with me."

The small female person's lips shut into a thin line. A murmur came from the group. "You never can tell about them swells." . . . "Ain't it somethin' terrible?" . . . "Wot's the world comin' to?" . . . "An' her buildin' a Episcopal church!" . . . "Oh, them Episcopal!" . . . "The minister had oughter be told."

"Say," said a small boy, entering breathless, "I ben all round the house an' I ain't seen no robbers. They must 'a' went away."

The group bristled with angry life. "Let's go out an' drive 'em away." . . . "Don't give 'em no mercy." . . . "Dummed horse thieves—lynch 'em!"—"Lynch the kidnappers!"

Despite the screams of the small female person, the crowd tumbled in a menacing mass out of the door. Delancy followed. Through the cold night came the drumbeat of galloping horses.

"It's the polict."

"Always gettin' in after the other fellers has done the fightin'."

"Son," said Delancy to the small boy, "which way is Cobb's Hill?"

"Thataway." A small finger pointed in the opposite direction to that from which came the beating of the advancing hoofs.

Unnoticed and very quietly Mr. Delancy started for Cobb's Hill. As he turned in between the lamp-crowned pillars of his sister's gateway he paused.

"What was it that I came to tell Olivia?" he murmured. "How annoying to have to bring important news and not know what it is!"

However, the importance of his unknown news impressed itself more and more upon his mind and his manner as he approached the house. Calm, majestic and awful of mien, he touched the bell. Tall, pale, grave and sad, he stood amid the frivolous pink satin and gold of the drawing-room. Angry, red and voluminous, the mother entered on an icy wind that seemed to put the furniture into cold storage.

"Oliver!" she said, each syllable a new Farthest North record.

He said nothing, for the very good reason that he knew nothing to say. But

he knew that, whatever it was he could not remember, it would cause her to suffer agonies when he could remember it. His gaze was full of a melancholy sadness. His eyes were filled with tears.

The red faded from the majestic countenance before him. A look of fear came into the cold Winterfrost eyes. "Oliver," she quavered, "what is it?"

He did not answer. He did not know.

"Oliver, I have not heard from Jim in a week. Is it about Jim?"

"Yes, it's Jim," he cried with astonishing suddenness.

"Is he dead?" she screamed.

He shook his head. He knew Jim was not dead.

"Why do you look like that? Oliver! Oliver! What awful thing has happened?"

He still looked at her without speaking. It occurred to him that, as she had found out that he came about Jim, she might discover what else it was he had come about.

"Oliver"—her cry was piercing—"is he married?"

"He's married," said Oliver Delancy.

With a scream that dragged the listening servants from every keyhole into the room, Olivia Delancy Winterfrost fell in a swoon.

"Her mother's heart is broken. Get her some whiskey," said Mr. Delancy.

"Madam does not allow a drop in the house, sir," said the butler.

Delancy looked at him.

"I'll bring some at once, sir," said the menial.

"My heart is broken, too—bring me some."

Delancy stood in the hall. From behind the closed doors of the drawing-room came the pitying cries of women, the smell of burnt feathers, the sound of the slapping of inert hands. Tears stood in the newsbreaker's eyes.

"Poor sister," he mourned; "you have now only me." He frowned.

"Wretched boy—heartless, brutal cub—breaking his mother's heart, never forgive him—never."

The door bell rang. He opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Winterfrost in?" said a voice sharp and thin as a hatpin from under a brilliant kitchen garden with poultry in it.

"Come in," said Mr. Delancy.

The kitchen garden entered. Beneath it Delancy detected pink skirts.

"What do you want?" he inquired.

"I want to see Mrs. Winterfrost."

"Have you business with her?"

"Of course I have."

"What business?"

"I got a message to her from her son Jim."

Delancy started; his eyes glittered evilly.

"Come with me," he said, and led the way to a side room. The hall was dim, but this room was brightly lit with lamps. The protector of the widow, the friend of the fatherless, turned in majestic scorn upon the kitchen garden.

"Woman," he said icily, "don't dare to deny it—I know you. You have married my nephew."

"Don't yuh go slippin' me no insults," cried the hatpin voice from under the kitchen garden. Then the eyes somewhere hidden in the foliage saw him as he stood before her in the clear light. The hatpin vanished, and in a voice like a very small needle the kitchen garden wailed in terror:

"Please don't do nothin' to me! I—I seen yuh in the drug store this afternoon, but I didn't have nothin' to do with any of yer troubles—I—I didn't. Please—"

He waved his hand for silence. "Do you mean to tell me you have not married him?" he demanded.

"No, sir. I hope to God to die if I—"

He waved his hand for more silence. He wrapped himself in his legal manner, the manner with which in the morning he would cross-examine some hackman from the bar of the night court. He was a very successful cross-examiner, as the further the night proceeded the more majestic he became, while the same could never be said of any cabman who ever drove Delancy; they, poor creatures, were apt to forget how many hours the night continued and make

statements that sent them forth with stinging rebukes from the court.

"Now," said the cross-examiner, "pay attention to what I ask you—and remember your oath to speak only the truth."

"I didn't swear. I only said God help me if—"

"Silence! You say you are not married to him?"

"Yes, sir, so help me—"

"Silence! What proof have you got that this marriage did not take place?"

"I—I ain't got no certificate."

The cross-examiner smiled coldly.

"That proves nothing. I have known many a marriage to take place without one." The door behind him opened. He glared at the trembling culprit. "You are my nephew's wife!" he shouted.

A loud, ear piercing, heart shattering scream sounded behind him, and the most awful sight that can meet human eyes, a mother who sees for the first time the wife of her son's unexpected marriage, ran between them.

"Oliver," she screamed, "is that creature my son's wife?" and she pointed at a large rooster among the foliage of the kitchen garden.

"It is," said Oliver Delancy.

"It ain't!" wailed the kitchen garden, frantic with terror. "He's tryin' to make me say I am, but I ain't. I never see yer son till this night. Oh, I'm afraid of that bug there! Help! Help!" She fled. Her cry died away as she banged the hall door behind her.

Olivia Winterfrost turned upon her brother.

"This is a vile plot of yours. Out of my house and tell your victim, my son, that I make another will tomorrow. Leave my house!"

"Olivia," said Mr. Delancy in hurt tones, "don't talk to me as if I were a house mover. I will leave your house. I would never take away a house with Doric columns and an Elizabethan roof. This is the last time I am good-natured. Good night."

He withdrew in cold displeasure. At the gate he was met by an excited crowd, which informed him in many voices that

they had caught the kidnapper and sent him on in the patrol wagon to jail. They had captured him as he was sneaking over the wall of that very palace. But Mr. Delancy would never be good-natured again. He showed so little interest, and sent them about their business so coldly, that they were angry and muttered against him for a heartless brute as they withdrew down the road.

Delancy stood at the gate watching the lanterns of the crowd diminishing like homeward bound fireflies. The whole silent night looked frostily up at the cold stars. A cool night wind fanned his face. He started and looked with surprise at the gateposts of his sister's place.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "I promised my poor nephew to tell his mother; I must go and do so." He entered, hurried up the walk and rang the bell. But no one answered.

"Well, I'll tell her the first thing in the morning," said Mr. Delancy, and disposing himself comfortably on the door mat he went to sleep.

Someone was shaking him violently; also someone was calling his name.

He sat up. To his vast surprise he was on a strange piazza, evidently in the country. The first pale light of dawn was touching the high pillars of the strange piazza, and greening the tops of strange trees. The only thing that was not strange was his nephew, and he looked curiously haggard, disheveled and tired.

"What are you doing on mother's porch?" asked the nephew.

Mr. Delancy rose. It was, after all, something to know whose porch it was. "I will tell you later all about it, Jim," he said with dignity.

But the youth was too full of his own sufferings to notice anything.

"Oh, Uncle Oliver, I have had such a terrible night! After you left me I got wild. I walked the floor for hours. Then I was so wild I could not stand it any more, so I decided that I must come home and hear how mother took it. I found the town all wrought up over some horse thieves who had robbed a

poor man. I could not hire a carriage because everyone was out searching for the robbers. So I walked out here. I thought I would get some of the servants to tell you I was out in the garden so you could sneak out and tell me how the old lady was taking it. Just as I was climbing over the garden wall, a lot of fellows grabbed me and pointed guns at me and kept yelling, "What have you done with the child?" and I thought they were crazy, but they took me on down the road and wouldn't listen a minute to what I said; only I was able to whisper to a girl that came along to run here and tell mother. She was a nice girl and said she would do it, although it would make her late to see her fellow. But I don't think she believed me, because she never did it. For I know mother would not have left me in jail."

"How did you get out?" said Oliver, much interested in the strange story.

"Well, I guess the captain had his doubts about me from the first. And he telephoned up here that they had the kidnapper, and he said that mother answered the 'phone; and then he seemed rather frightened and let me go. Oh, Oliver, what a night! And, Oliver—Oliver—what did mother say when you told her?"

Mr. Delancy pressed the bell. "You shall receive her message from her own lips," he said. What it would be he didn't know; in fact, he had no idea of what had happened since he had arrived in town. But if you don't know anything, the best thing to do is to listen patiently and you will find out.

The door opened and was filled with the awful form of Olivia Winterfrost.

"I heard your voices," she said. "I do not wish my servants to see the two shames of our family."

"Oh, mother," cried the boy, "forgive me! I will never do it again. I promise you."

"How many more marriages you choose to make is nothing to me," said the stern mother.

"Marriages!" cried the boy. "What are you talking about?"

The finger of the mother pointed sternly at Oliver Delancy. "I know all.

He has told me of your marriage," she said.

"But I am not married!" cried the youth in amazement. "I sent him to say that I had been expelled from college."

The mother's cry was as the morning. "Come to my arms, my son—my son!" She folded him to her breast. Over the top of his head her eyes seared Delancy.

"Out of my sight, heartless—cruel—unspeakable—liar!" she hissed.

Delancy held up his hand. "Silence," he said coldly. The mother, clutching her son to her bosom, glared speechless.

"Olivia," he said calmly, "I came here to give you a lesson."

"Liar!"

"When your boy—your only son—came to me and told me he had been expelled from college for drunkenness, my heart stood still—because, my sister, I know you; I know that proud Spartan nature that is in your bosom. I knew that once you said a thing that worlds could not move you."

He paused, but now she did not hiss, "Liar."

"And I trembled when I thought of what you would do when your son should tell you he had been expelled for drunkenness—drunkenness—a thing you abhor! No one knows what awful thing might have happened. So I said:

'I will show her there are other depths to which he might descend, depths from which her son, her only son, could never return to her arms again.' So I told you he was married. I knew that when you discovered the truth I would be all in—I mean—er—I would be cast out of your life; but I knew that in the relief and joy you would clasp your son again to your heart. So proudly, gladly I sacrificed myself for your happiness. And I leave him in your arms forgiven. Last night you turned me from the house, but I still watched over you, sister. I lay all night on your doorstep to protect you, but now you have your son to do that. For the last time in this life, good-bye."

He bowed. But she cast herself upon his bosom and with tears bade him stay to breakfast, while Jim crushed his hand in adoration.

"Oh, Oliver," cried the mother—"I was so cruel in answering your letter as I did. I will do what you wish—right after breakfast."

"But what I can't understand is why that girl didn't tell mother I was in jail," said Jim. "She said she would."

"My son," said Delancy, slipping an affectionate arm about his shoulders, "when a woman says she will do a thing, that's the first indication that she won't." He started and glanced over his shoulder for Olivia.

But Olivia had gone to write a cheque.



"THE Bible says that the meek shall inherit the earth."

"Yes, but the other fellows get the lawyers' fees and a confiscatory inheritance tax before title is passed."



"HOW much did your biggest fish weigh?"
"It didn't get a weigh; it got away."

ON THE SEEING-EUROPE 'PLANE

By Stuart B. Stone

I SAY—this way, y'know! Yankee schoolma'ams, Cook's tourists, Clark's tourists, bloomin' newrichies, refugees, honeymooners. Take your seats on the seeing-Europe autoplane. All the crypts, shrines, leaning towers, war lords, crumbling west wings, sacred bones and plague centers. Better than Baedeker; faster than the Orient Express—tipless, odorless, snobless and snubless!

The tight little isle beneath your feet is English soil. You may deposit your "h's" with the guard. A supply of the redundant species of this member of the great alphabet family will be found on top.

The immense fog directly ahead is the city of London. The fog is a condensation of the chilly, phlegmatic exhalations and radiations of the inhabitants. London is the largest city in the world—contains more suffragettes than Colorado, more younger sons than Youngstown, more valets than Vallejo. London is a thousand years ancient, and becomes more antiquated every time she is compared with New York.

To the right you will observe Greenwich. The sun ever sets on British time. Don't get tangled with the meridian. On the left is Oxford. The metallic clinking is produced by the Rhodes scholars stretching out their coin to allow for Continental vacations.

Proceeding northward now we enter the Lake District, a region which suffered from a congestion of poets in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Be careful not to tread on the feet nor monkey with the meter.

Across the expanse of water to your left is the Isle of Man, inhabited by the moody Gloomsters. The whirlpool in

evidence is occasioned by the overactivity of Hall Caine in drawing royalties. The green territory just beyond is Ireland, which exports rulers for all the world, but produces none for domestic purposes. The kailyard directly ahead is Scotland. The mountains visible to the north are called Ben—short for Benjamin, as the Highlands haven't enough altitude for the full name. But let us awa' before we become entangled wi' the dialect. Hoot!

We now set sail for Calais, a French city once inscribed on the heart of Queen Mary. The low, level lands to the left are the Netherlands. While you place your fingers in your ears, I will pronounce the names of the cities—Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Schiedam, Leerdam, Zaandam, Edam. In Holland it is necessary to dam the entire North Sea. We pass quickly lest we be eternally damned.

Proceeding southward, we come to Paris, breeding ground of the smugglologicus germ. The Old Sleuthy person with the S. Holmes expression standing in the Rue de la Paix is one of Loeb's minions. We must flee to avoid the appearance of evil.

We now cross the Pyrenees into Spain. Passports ready, please. Any Carlists, Republicans or Socialists on board? No, we're not after you, my dear Alphonse. On the right I call your attention to the ex-kingdom of Portugal, the strongest insurgent republican territory east of Kansas. Directly south is Gibraltar, an impregnable rock guarding the entrance to the life insurance magazine advertising section.

Turning northward, we pause at Monte Carlo long enough to break the bank. Or, if your American cashiers

are absent in the Muskoka and Temagami regions of Canada, we will pass on to the Riviera. Nice, isn't it? To the left are the Alps, where Europe turned upside down owing to the preponderance of tourists. Beyond the Alps lies Italy—your pardon, ma'am; I did not mean to plagiarize your valedictory address. Passing rapidly southward, we see Leghorn, the millinery shop of Europe, Rome, city of the seven incidents, and Naples, home of the Mediterranean Peril. The startling eruption on the face of the earth is Vesuvius. This frightful terrestrial skin disease has baffled the world's physicians and scientists for centuries.

Turning northward again, we behold Florence, queen of the Arno. Thirty minutes to spot, study, comprehend, criticize and revere the great masters—or what the American millionaires have left of them. Next on the right is Venice, the greatest canal center this side of Mars.

Directly ahead is Vienna. The rhythmic hum proceeding from the Blue Danube is produced by the numerous operetta factories. Just in front is Budapest. About here the European ceases to wear pants and allows his shirt to hang on the outside. The dense, black war cloud emitting Armageddon thunder and lightning is the Balkans. Beyond lies Constantinople; but we must not tarry, lest the young Turks borrow our wallets.

Far to the right you will observe the Caucasus. Beyond is the arena for the Armenian massacres, the national pastime of the Turks. Have your passports ready now and look out for the Russian Third Section just behind. We are now flying over St. Petersburg. The terrific explosions are caused by the Nihilists practising on the Winter Palace. The uproarsky to the left is produced by the Duma in sessionovitch.

Hoch der passport—the German frontier! Just ahead is Berlin. The thunderous r-r-rolling r-r-reports are occasioned by the Kaiser comparing himself with the Almighty. Farther on is Leipzig, a large body of lager entirely surrounded by university students. To the left is Nuremberg, the stalking ground of all wooden and tin natural history.

On the island to the right is Copenhagen, a Danish city which delights to honor Americans and doesn't ask "to be shown." Look behind to see that they have not pinned any university degrees to the tail of our plane. To the extreme right you will observe the cities of Stockholm and Christiania, where if we tarry we are apt to receive notice from our domestics.

The *Mauwetania* waits in the Mersey. Let us hurry. . . . But I have not the change, monsieur. . . . Ah, thanks. In America you are all rich, very rich.



TO SUIT THE TIMES

By Blanche Elizabeth Wade

EXPRESSIONS change as do the years;
For instance, just today,
"A better man ne'er walked the earth,"
We often hear men say.

The time is near when even that
Will be a saying dead;
"A better man ne'er clove the air,"
Is what we'll hear instead.

THE APPLE

By Roland Ashford Phillips

THAT enchanted carpet, Forty-second Street, for all practical purposes begins at Hammerstein's, runs proudly through the blazing incandescent cañon and wanders dismally riverward beyond Eighth Avenue. The pleasure gods who nightly shake the dice box of Manhattan are not particular as to how or where the cubes roll upon this stretch of echoing asphalt so long as they do roll; nor are they particular as to their appearance.

The mouth of the dice box is Broadway and Forty-second Street. Here the subway mysteriously vomits the common lot; taxicabs, limousines and soft purring electrics give up their burdens of diamond-decked, white-shirted, dull-eyed and fat-pocketed patricians. The maelstrom is born; beggars on foot and kings and queens who ride, in this eight o'clock magic rub elbows, breathe each other's breath and laugh. Pansy Baker was one of the dice.

She stepped upon the enchanted carpet, allowed herself to be tossed back and forth, feasted her hungry eyes upon the visions that floated from the cabs and gloried in the ever ebbing current of light and life and color.

Pansy was doubly attractive because she was not of New York. The city virus was yet too freshly inoculated. People turned around and looked at her the second time. Her complexion did not come from Riker's, but from that vast and little known territory west of Hoboken. Her eyes were as clear and as blue as the lake near which she was born. Her lips were as smooth and velvet soft as the night dew on a grass stem; her hair was sun-touched and wind-kissed and as brown as an autumn leaf.

She was just as high as a good man's heart.

Pansy had been in Manhattan two weeks, had written home to Erie, Pa., three times in that period and had found a position only this morning. To be sure, demonstrating egg beaters in the stuffy basement of a Fourteenth Street store was hardly what she had aimed to do, but for the present she reluctantly accepted it. She had been taught, in Erie, that if one shoots an arrow at the sky it is apt to strike higher than if one aimed at the top of a tree. Being a woman, this advice was useless.

Now in the fortnight spent within the magic city Pansy had never ventured into a playhouse other than a picture show somewhere on Eighth Avenue. It did not impress her, for she was used to such things back in Erie. Yet Pansy had only been demonstrating egg beaters an hour before the head of the stock made a proposal. Being from Erie, Pa., she was flustered. Being a woman, she was flattered. However, she remembered her mother's advice; it had been dinned in her ears since she first began to ask questions; it was held over her like the proverbial goblin: "A New York man'll get you if you don't behave!"

So Pansy refused. Some day, she reflected, the right man would come, just as the right man always does come, in the popular magazines; and then—

Now this night, when the pleasure gods shook the box and gleefully rolled out the dice, Pansy and one other were included. Pansy strolled there from her Forty-fourth Street hall room; Bert Baxter lived on Forty-second Street from ten in the morning until the first act of

"The Laughing Princess" was over in the evening. Bert was one of those pests—to others, not himself—who will wave a fistful of folded dollar bills in your eyes and a pack of tickets under your nose, with the remark:

"How many y'u like tonight? Here's two in the second row, center! Only a dollar advance! Nothin' at the box office! What?"

Bert took a flying trip to New Haven or some other village where a canine verdict was to be rendered, formed his own conclusions, returned to New York and invested his bankroll in tickets for future performances.

"The Laughing Princess" handed him a solar plexus. He misjudged it in Providence and neglected to supply himself with the precious pasteboards when the attraction hit Forty-second Street. As a direct consequence he had to resort to many methods that they might be procured.

His usual plan was not his own, nor was it by any means new, but it served his purpose admirably. The ogre in the box office knew him too well, as did the special officer in the lobby. Therefore he had to enlist the sympathy of a passer-by.

Fate made Pansy a passer-by. Among all the tumbling dice that rolled through the brilliant lobby that night, Pansy, to Bert's critical eye, appeared to be the most hopeful.

"I beg your pardon, lady," he remarked, slipping up beside her in the lobby and tipping his immaculate derby, "but would you mind buying me a few seats?"

Pansy turned bewildered.

"Buy—some seats?"

"Yes," and Bert smiled his Broadway best. "It'll only take you a minute and—some rainy night if you'll drop around I'll slip you a couple for your trouble."

He dug up a roll and passed her two five-dollar notes.

"There! Just get me five in the orchestra for Saturday afternoon."

Pansy's fingers closed over the money. Before she could reason with herself she was in line. Bert skidded toward

the door because he felt the boring eyes of the special officer upon him. It would not do to let him suspect.

But the getaway was a trifle too slow. The officer, pompous in his blue coat and shining buttons, collared the speculator.

"Didn't I tell y'u never to step into this here lobby? Didn't I warn y'u?"

Then Bert said something. After that the whole lobby was in a small panic, Pansy included. The fight began abruptly and ended in the same fashion. A couple of policemen hurried in, and between them they carried the protesting, fighting, incoherent Bert out of sight and hearing.

Pansy stood helplessly among the others, her heart beating thickly, the two five-dollar notes clutched desperately in her cold fingers.

II

WHEN Pansy returned to her refuge on Forty-fourth Street she was still in a nervous flutter. She put the two fives on the dresser, desperately wondering what was to be done. Meanwhile she paced back and forth through the suite—that is, her hallroom and closet, both being of similar size. And a quarter of an hour later, still unequal to the situation, a knock came at the door.

Before she could call out, Mrs. Crullerton stepped in. Money is a magnet to a landlady's roving eyes.

"Why, dearie, got some money for me, did you?" She put on a room renting smile. "That's so nice of you, it is. I don't like to be hard on my roomers, but seems like this winter expenses is somethin' fierce."

Pansy made an involuntary move for the dresser. She was two weeks behind in the rent, but this money could not be used for such a purpose.

"The money—I got it—" She choked.

"I don't care how you got it, dearie," and Mrs. Crullerton put an affectionate arm about the girl. "You needn't tell me. I know how hard it is to get." She hesitated and picked up one of the

bills, stowing it away in her shapeless bosom. "This'll square us for the two weeks. And now wouldn't you like to come down and have a cup of warm tea? Why, you're shiverin', dearie!"

Somehow Pansy got the landlady out of the room and managed to lock the door. After that she lighted the gas heater. Then she sat on the edge of the one chair and stared dry-eyed and dismally at the opposite wall. Why hadn't she been brave and confessed everything? Why had she allowed Mrs. Crullerton to take the money that did not belong to her?

The gas heater sang—reminding her of the tea kettle in Erie, Pa. It was such a homesick sound. From the mysterious depths of her closet came the steady *click—click—click* of the faithful gas meter as it marked off the dimes. With a long, quivering sigh Pansy stirred herself into life, slipped off the chair, went over to a dresser drawer, opened it and brought out a paper bag of fruit. Returning, she sank to the red-covered divan, drew her feet beneath her and proceeded to munch one of the big, bright apples.

Now these were not ordinary apples. They had come from old man Simpson's orchard in Erie. They had the reputation of being the most mellow, sweetest, juiciest apples ever grown. Once you ate one of them you never forgot the flavor. Remember that statement: once you ate one of them you never forgot the flavor! Simpson claimed it came from the fact that his trees were watched over by the lake fairies. But from whatever cause it was, Simpson's apples were famous. They were red and green speckled; when your teeth sank through the skin and the juice bubbled about your lips it gave you the instant sensation of being lifted above the clouds. There is no description possible. When one left Erie, Pa., one had Simpson's apples shipped him; other apples were useless. And they came through by registered express—the same as diamonds. There existed as much difference between the ordinary fruit and Simpson's as between a prune and an olive.

That is why Pansy, on leaving home, brought with her this sack of luscious fruit. She had come with two dozen, and there now remained only four. So she munched, forgot her troubles, tossed the core into the waste basket and prepared to retire.

After commanding the divan to become a bed, Pansy crept between the clammy sheets to dream of immaculate derbies, five-dollar bills, unexpected landladies and Simpson's apples.

In the morning she devoured the third apple, got a cup of coffee at the nearest marble-slabbed, mirror-hung morgue and hurried away to show the hesitating shoppers on Fourteenth Street the quick and easy method of whipping eggs into a beautiful, creamy froth.

"The simplest machine ever invented, ladies! Will save you many precious moments. Beats your eggs in thirty seconds.* Nothing to get out of order. A child can operate them. And today my company allows me to dispose of them for ten cents! Yes, madam. No, madam! Thank you, madam. What? C.O.D.? Certainly. What?"

And so it continued all day, save for the interval between twelve and twelve thirty, when she went upstairs for a cup of muddy chocolate and a piece of banana cake.

When she came home that night Mrs. Crullerton met her in the dim hall and did a very unusual thing—asked her to come into the basement for dinner.

"There's plenty for us all, dearie," she went on. "I've only two regular boarders. Come right down when you wash, won't you?"

Pansy completed her toilet and descended. The folks had already started eating. Mrs. Crullerton rose to introduce her. Besides the landlady there were five others at the table. Pansy dimly remembered bowing and repeating their names, that was all. The cause of her shock—the thing that seemed to change her blood into ice water—was the fact that directly opposite from there she was asked to sit was the gentleman with the immaculate derby.

Mr. Baxter looked up, nodded care-

lessly and went on eating his soup. Was it possible, she asked herself, that he did not recognize her?

"And you were saying, Mr. Baxter—" the landlady took up, as if Pansy's entrance had interrupted a previous conversation. "You see—" she nodded to Pansy as if to explain—"Mr. Baxter is a ticket speculator, and last night he was run in by a special."

The girl from Erie, Pa., tried to smile.

"Well, it was just like the other time." Baxter pushed back his soup plate. "Judge gave me a lecture and fined me a ten-spot. Oh, I didn't mind the ten, but I hated to lose out on the night's business. Them theaters are getting down on us specs."

Never a word concerning the incident in the lobby! In fear and trembling Pansy hung on to every new sentence. Baxter looked hard at her several times, but not a trace of recognition was apparent.

After the dessert Pansy excused herself and slipped out of the room. The speculator had already gone. Pansy went slowly up the dark stairs. At the first landing, where a single pale gas jet struggled for life, she met him.

He smiled. And then she understood. A woman always understands, whether she comes from Erie, Pa., or from Forty-second Street.

A torrent of explanations broke from her lips. He did not seem to hear.

"I've got half of it upstairs," she stammered. "And—and the rest I'll pay back Saturday night."

He gripped her wrist almost savagely and leaned so near that his lips swept her ear.

"Never mind any of it, little one," he answered. "I won't say a word about it—if you'll be sensible."

"I—I don't understand," she wavered. "It isn't right in my taking—"

"There, there; forget all about it! I'll see you later. Good-bye."

She went on up the stairs, heart fluttering, her cold fingers about the wrist he had grasped.

Outside, as he swung around Rector's corner and headed for Forty-second Street, Bert Baxter chuckled to himself.

"What luck! And right in the same house, too!"

III

BERT BAXTER was like the proverbial empty revolver—he was dangerous. He had imbibed the tainted atmosphere of Forty-second Street for so long a period that his finer sensibilities—he possessed them, for, like Pansy, he, too was an alien—had become dulled. White lights, brick, stone, steel and asphalt make up a virus that is deadly. Bert was not unlike the little girl with the curl right in the middle of her forehead; for when he was good he was very, very good, and when he was bad he was horrid.

At the corner of Seventh Avenue he hesitated long enough for an Irish stew, which Tommy—as Tommy alone—could mix. Thus prepared, he took up his usual stand before the brilliant lobby. Betweenwhiles he retold his adventures to the admiring group of speculators.

"But, believe me, boys, it was worth it," he added.

He meant Pansy was worth it—but the boys did not understand.

For two days nothing of interest happened—that is, nothing of apparent interest. Pansy still sold egg beaters for ten cents and Bert sold pasteboards for ten dollars. However, Mrs. Crullerton smiled more frequently on Pansy and firmly insisted that she eat dinners with the folks in the basement. Pansy mistook the appeal as coming from the landlady's heart. It came from Bert's pocket instead.

And as for Mr. Baxter, Mrs. Crullerton spoke of him continually—told her of his habits—the best of them—of his position and of his past. One thing that she mentioned, quite by accident, caused Pansy to catch at her breath. If this was true, then he—

Pansy kept from Baxter's sight as much as possible. She began to fear him—in a way that some women fear some men. A possible solution of her problem came winging to her sleepless brain on the second night.

On Friday the unexpected happened. The rainy night materialized, and right before the others at the basement table the speculator asked her to accompany him to the theater. If his suggestion had been in the dim hall, or if he had held her wrist, she might have refused. But here—it was different. There could be no blame attached to Pansy's answer. When a cup of cold water is held to a thirsty man's lips—he drinks. After all, the girl from Erie, Pa., was human, and therefore no exception to the rule.

In a flutter of nervous excitement Pansy fumbled through her trunk and brought out her Erie best. It took her half an hour to dress. Mrs. Crullerton, happening to pass, knocked lightly and stepped in.

"Can't I help you, dearie?" she ventured; and then: "You do look so sweet!"

Pansy blushed. It was vastly better than rouge; and Bert, coming along the hall and peering through the partly opened door, sucked in his breath and looked swiftly into the landlady's eyes.

"The Laughing Princess" left Pansy bewildered and dazed with its three acts of color and music and whirling visions. She forgot to applaud and only sat there, leaning forward, her eyes on the stage. Bert kept his eyes on her, and went out between acts to fill his lungs with smoke and his mind with castles.

And when it was all over she felt a strange, not unpleasant thrill, as she clung to his arm and they wormed their way out into the clear, crisp December night, on up the street, down the Avenue to Forty-fourth, and then waited patiently on the curb until the policeman signaled them to cross. The Manhattan virus was in its first stage of development.

In the dim hall—was it darker than usual, or was it but imagination?—Bert pressed her arm. The blood raced to her temples. On the third floor he went into her hall room, struck a match and lighted both the jet and the heater.

Pansy removed her coat and hat and gloves. Bert settled himself on the trunk and rolled a cigarette.

"Like the show, girlie?"

"Oh, it was wonderful!" she gasped.

"We'll go again—soon."

He inhaled slowly, tilted his head and allowed the blue smoke to drift ceilingward. She tried to avoid his eyes.

"Suppose I go out and bring in something to eat?" he suggested carelessly.

"I'm not hungry—not at all," Pansy protested.

"But you can eat, can't you? I'll get a bucket from Mrs. Crullerton and—"

Pansy interrupted by moving across the room and opening the bureau drawer. She took out a wrinkled paper bag. It gave up its last treasure—one, big shining apple. She held it out toward the man on the trunk. He only frowned and shook his head.

"Never care for them, girlie."

"Oh, but these are wonderful apples, Mr. Baxter," she hurried. "You won't find them here in this town—not many, anyway!" She was about to add that they came from Simpson's orchard, but checked the impulse.

"Eat it yourself," he argued.

"Just to please me," she begged. "You eat it!"

He accepted the apple, turned it over and over in his fingers. Then he removed the cigarette and placed it carefully on the heater.

"Here goes, just to please you, girlie!"

He opened his mouth and sank his teeth into the red and green speckled skin. He munched; he swallowed; he munched and swallowed again.

"What the dickens—" he began sharply. Pansy noticed the puzzled light in his eyes.

"Isn't it—good?" she struggled.

"Why, hang it all"—he was muttering and swallowing at the same time—"hang it all—this apple—why, I haven't tasted one of these for ten years! It's from old man Simpson's orchard—in Erie!"

Pansy's eyes were shining, and she stood before him clasping and unclasping her cold fingers.

"Then—then you *are* from Erie!" she burst out. "I—I wasn't sure until—"

"Erie?" Bert's face was undergoing a gradual change. "I lived right next door to the old orchard! Think I'd ever forget the taste of those apples? Used to sneak in nights and swipe 'em. And you—" He lifted his eyes. How very, very differently they rested upon her now!

Before she was aware she had told him everything: her leaving, her ambitions, about the folks at home in the little white cottage that rested at the foot of the big hill.

"By Jinks!" he said once or twice reverently. Then he got up from the trunk, reached for his hat and started for the door.

"It's getting later than I thought. You'll be wanting to turn in. I'll see you tomorrow, Miss Baker—mayn't I?"

He went out into the hall, still clutching the apple.

Pansy shut the door, turned the key in it and then stumbled across the floor to the divan. She threw herself upon it and the first hot tears came.

On the floor below Mrs. Crullerton put her head out of her door and frowned at the speculator.

"That you, Mr. Baxter? Why, I thought—"

"I know what you thought," Bert interrupted sharply; "but cut it out! Understand? Cut it out—for good!"



THE SHIMMER OF THE SOUND

By Richard Le Gallienne

IN the long shimmer of the Sound
 May I some day be laughing found,
 Part of its restless to and fro,
 A humble worker of the tides
 That travail round the sleepless world,
 Changing the sea shell to strange pearl,
 And in the rock and drift of things—
(Oh, how the seaweed sways and swings!
Is it her hair—has she been found
In the long shimmer of the Sound?)
 Do some small task I do not know—
 Oh, maybe help the mussel grow—
 A mute companion of the waves
 That toss within their moonlit graves—
 Is it a king, or but a girl?
 And all the while she sings and sings,
 And waves her white hands to the shore,
 That singing water called the sea,
 Mysterious sister of the world.
(Oh, tell me, was this seaweed found
In the long shimmer of the Sound?)

DIES IRAE

By Frederick W. Wendt

CHARACTERS

A WOMAN

AN OFFICER

PLACE: *Moscow.*

TIME: *The present.*

SCENE—*A poorly furnished attic. There are three windows at the back, the wooden blinds of which are closed. There is a door at the left. On the table in the center stands a kind of brazier in which a woman is burning papers and letters. A lighted candle on a shelf leaves the room in semi-darkness but paints ghostly shadows here and there. When the curtain rises a distant church bell tolls the hour of twelve. A bugle signal is heard, answered farther and farther away by others. Then comes a roll of drums.*

WOMAN

The smoke rises to heaven like incense. And if God hears—if—if! He's deaf to Russia's prayers. Deaf! Deaf! *(A bugle sounds outside, followed by shots.)*

That's the answer to Russia's prayers for freedom! Bugles! Bullets! Death! *(She takes up a photograph and kisses it.)* Oh, my boy, my son! You are in prison now, a conspirator—a Nihilist. But if they hurt a hair on your head—the Czar shall die! I swear it! But they have no proof—and even in Russia they cannot, dare not, kill a boy without some shadow of a proof. And ashes *(Stirring the contents of the brazier)* tell no tales. *(Firing is heard.)* Shoot, you cowards! Shoot! When one patriot falls, ten take his place. *(There is a commotion outside; she goes to the window.)* They have proclaimed martial law, and the windows must be drawn tight shut, so they can kill without our seeing it. I wonder if they dare fire on a woman if I disobey? *(She opens a wooden shutter; snow is seen falling.)* I'll disobey the order of the Great White Czar. *(There is a crash of*

glass as a bullet breaks the window. Bitterly.) The answer was not long in coming. *(She closes the wooden shutter.)* Yes, I'll obey, you hounds!—until the Czar is dead. It was folly, madness, to draw their fire like that. If they should come and search my attic now! *(Stirring the brazier.)* Ashes tell no tales. But—a woman put to torture—might. Wait. *(She takes a small bottle from a shelf and pours a little of the contents into a glass, then places a bottle of vodka and the glass on the table and throws the first bottle on the floor; she lifts the glass.)* A tortured woman might—but a dead woman—can't. And if it comes to the worst—*(There is a knock at the door. For a moment silence follows; then a louder knock is heard. She hides the photograph in her dress.)*

VOICE OUTSIDE

Open! Open—in the Czar's name!

(The WOMAN stands rigid, staring at the door. After an instant the door is forced open, and an officer in Cossack's uniform, with a drawn pistol, enters.)

THE SMART SET

WOMAN

'Tis a brave thing to force yourself into a woman's room at midnight.

OFFICER

I did not know it was a woman's room. Is there anyone here but you?

WOMAN

I am alone.

OFFICER

Why did you open the window? You knew—

WOMAN

Yes, I knew.

OFFICER

You seem brave. We thought the room held men.

WOMAN

And still you entered—alone.

OFFICER

My men refused—the cowards!

WOMAN

You're brave, Sir Officer, to come alone. For, though there're not, there *might* have been men here.

OFFICER

The officer takes chances with the rest. What's burning in that brazier?

WOMAN

An evening meal.

OFFICER

Of paper? (*He goes to the table.*) Your name?

WOMAN

Anna.

OFFICER (*looking up quickly*)

Anna?

WOMAN

I trust that the name is not against the law?

OFFICER

Not that. I once knew a girl by that name.

WOMAN

I dare say there are other Annas besides myself.

OFFICER

She had your voice. But it was long ago. Where were you born?

WOMAN

Here in Moscow.

OFFICER

The Anna that I knew was born in Moscow, too. (*There is a knock at the door; he opens it. A soldier appears.*) Guard the outer door downstairs. Let no one enter or go out.

(*The soldier salutes and retires.*)

WOMAN

So you're afraid I might escape! (*Shots are heard outside.*) Where could I go through the deep snow at midnight?

OFFICER

You are right. It's bitter cold in the streets.

WOMAN

And colder still—here in my heart.

OFFICER

What were you burning in that brazier?

WOMAN

A patriot's soul.

(*The OFFICER picks parts of unburnt paper from the ashes. The WOMAN darts forward to snatch them away. He grasps her hand and pushes her off.*)

OFFICER

Not so fast, my woman. There may be something here that I should see. Light the lamp.

(*The WOMAN stands with her arms folded.*)

OFFICER

Light the lamp, I say. Woman, you had better obey. (*He points his pistol at her.*)

(*The WOMAN walks backward toward a side table where the lamp stands. Her fists are clenched and her eyes riveted on the OFFICER. She takes up the lamp, then with a sudden impulse dashes it to the ground.*)

OFFICER (*ready to shoot, but controlling himself*)

That was brave—but not wise. You interest me—Anna. And so does this unburnt scrap of paper. (*He reads.*) "Death to the Czar! Long live the revolution! Ivanoff." Who is this Ivanoff? A—lover?

WOMAN

Of liberty and Russia—yes.

OFFICER (*grasping her wrist*)
Who is this Ivanoff?

WOMAN
Let me go! You're hurting me! Let me go! (*In the struggle the photograph she has hidden in her dress drops out.*)

(*The OFFICER quickly picks it up. She tries to take it from him, but he roughly throws her aside. He covers her with his pistol. Seeing a candle, he lights it and looks at the photograph.*)

OFFICER
Ah! "Your devoted son, Ivan." From whom did the boy take that name?

WOMAN
You asked me why my name is Anna. And now why my son's is Ivan.

OFFICER
This time I ask, because—

WOMAN
Well? Because?

OFFICER
Because it is my own.

WOMAN (*looking at him intently*)
Your—own? Your name is—Ivan? Ivan—Savatoff?

OFFICER (*In amazement, holding the candle to her face and staring at her as if hypnotized*)

Anna!

WOMAN
Yes—Ivan—yes. I recognize you now. He is our son—yours and mine. A boy who has a mother, but no father. Do you see why we hate the nobles and the Czar?

OFFICER
But, Anna, how came you here in Moscow?

WOMAN
When the boy was born I fled from Petersburg in disgrace and shame. I swore that I would never see you again. I worked and worked and worked—look at my hands! (*She holds out her hands to him.*) I—whom you dressed in silks and jewels—long ago!

OFFICER
I never knew.

WOMAN
No. I never took a kopeck of the fifty thousand rubles that you sent to my address. "I'll starve," I said, "with our boy"; but the money lies untouched, with interest—in the Czar's Bank—in your name—for you alone to claim. I would have died before I'd taken it.

OFFICER
Anna—had I known!

WOMAN
I found others who, like myself, had been brought to shame by—the nobles of our unhappy Russia. The nobles, the heads that suck the honor and the life blood of our country—to whom nothing is sacred—whose god is Lust!

OFFICER
Anna—

WOMAN
I hoped and prayed never to see you again. But you have come—as all things come—against my prayer. You broke into my room at midnight—after twenty years of silence!

OFFICER
Anna—listen to me. What can I do?

WOMAN
Nothing. Wait—yes. You can do something. You can save *our* boy.

OFFICER
Our boy!

WOMAN
Yes—yours and mine, Ivan. Two days ago he was taken from me by the secret police.

OFFICER
Great God! I knew the eyes—and yet I did not know!

WOMAN
You are an officer high in the Czar's favor. You can save him, can you not?

(*The OFFICER clutches the back of a chair, staring wildly at the WOMAN.*)

WOMAN
Why don't you speak? Why don't you speak and say that you will help to set him free—your son and mine?

OFFICER (*after a long pause*)
Because it is too late.

THE SMART SET

WOMAN

What do you mean? What do you mean? Speak, Ivan! Too late? Too late for what?

OFFICER (again after a long pause)

They shot him in the Prison of St. Paul last night. And I—signed the order. (He falls into a chair overcome.)

WOMAN (seeming for a moment not to understand)

You—signed—the—order—for—our son's death?

OFFICER

I did not know—I did not know!

WOMAN

No—of course—you did not know. (Mockingly.) You did not know. Oh, you coward! You coward!

(A long pause follows.)

OFFICER

I'm cold. Give me something to drink.

WOMAN (remembering the poison she has poured into the glass)

To drink? Ah, yes, to drink. Why, of course. It's lucky I have vodka in the house. (She pours the vodka into the glass.) See—it will warm you—warm you—through and through—Ivan.

OFFICER

Thanks, Anna—thanks.

WOMAN (struggling with her emotions)

Wait—

OFFICER

Why wait?

WOMAN

Yes, you are right. To Ivan's health, then, though he's shot to death! To Ivan's health!

(The OFFICER looks at her, then drains the glass. The WOMAN has put her head on her arms on the table and is sobbing violently.)

OFFICER (going over to her and putting his hand on her head)

Anna! Anna! Is the old love all dead? I searched for you for years, to try and right the wrong I did you. Then the Czar called, and I was ordered to the Far East. And yet, Anna, it was you and you alone whose picture was in my

soul. (He puts his hand to his head as if dizzy.) When I came back the Empire was in a turmoil. The red hand of revolt had been lifted against the very person of the Czar. There wasn't time for mercy. There isn't now. We are fighting for the life of our Emperor and our own lives. The people are as cruel and relentless as they say we are. Anna—Anna—forgive me! (He staggers to a chair.)

(The WOMAN raises her head and looks at him.)

OFFICER (sinking into a chair)

There's something wrong. The wine—

WOMAN

Was poisoned, Ivan—with a deadly poison. I poured it out myself—and now—

OFFICER

And now—you've given it to me. That is as it should be.

WOMAN

Ivan—Ivan—I still love you—in spite—in spite of all! Great God, what have I done?

OFFICER

What have you done? Nothing—(he staggers)—but—justice to—our—boy. But it means death to you as well—unless— Quick, while there is yet time! (He takes a piece of paper and a pencil lying on the table and writes.) "Pass Anna Savatoff through all the military lines. Ivan Savatoff." Now go—fly from this place as quickly as you can. (He hands the paper to her, staggers and falls to the floor.)

WOMAN (throwing herself upon him)

Ivan! Ivan! I love you!

OFFICER (rousing himself)

I've dreamed of this—of meeting you again—for eighteen years. And now—when it has come true—Anna—I've paid for it with my life. That's as it should be—justice must be done. I love you—Anna. (He falls back dead.)

WOMAN (with a cry throwing herself upon his body, kissing him madly, then going to the table and taking up the glass)

Not a drop left for me. (She takes up the pass he has signed and burns it in the

candle flame.) No, Ivan, I shall not take my freedom at that price. *(She kneels beside him.)* Ivan! Ivan! Dead! Is there no way I can join you both—you and our son? *(Firing is heard outside, then the sounds of drums.)* I understand. *(She takes up the lighted candle, and going to the window, opens the wooden shutters. The snow is seen falling and the light of bonfires gives a lurid glare. Drums beat. A command is heard.)*

WOMAN *(holding the candle above her head)*

See, soldiers! The Czar has killed my son—and I—I—have killed an officer of the Czar! Long live the revolution! Liberty! And Russia!

(A shot is heard. The candle falls from her hand. She falls dead. Bugles sound; there is a turmoil outside.)

CURTAIN



SCARLET POPPIES

By Gordon Johnstone

RED the meads where peopies blow,
 Red your lips and sweet, lass;
 Love should ne'er a-begging go,
 Life's too brief to squander so;
 E'en the scarlet poppies know
 A heart's beneath their feet, lass.

Purple dyes the heather way,
 Bright the hills wi' gold, lass,
 Still there's naught but longing gray
 In my heart that went astray
 O'er the fields o' yesterday
 Kiss't by lips sae cold, lass.

White the meads where poppies peep
 O'er your breast wi' rue, lass;
 Sad the winds that moaning sweep
 Down the night and will not sleep
 Calling through the darkness deep
 Ever calling you, lass.



PLENTY of young men are putting their shoulders to the wheel; the trouble is, too many times it's the wheel of fortune.

AEROPLATITUDES

By Richard Butler Glaenger

AT last Pegasus is vindicated—we fly by horse power.
“Good heavens!” is the aviator’s prayer as well as his exclamation.

“Fly time” now lasts all the year round.

A fly in the ointment has worried many a man, but a fly in the firmament will worry him more.

“To fly in the face of danger” is only aeroplane truth.

The wind bloweth where it listeth; but the aeroplane listeth where the wind bloweth.

To come back to earth is sometimes as painful in aviation as it is in revery.

Darwin was all wrong about the descent of man; it is dependent upon revolution, not evolution.

In the air world one must start “on the level” to rise.

Though your course has no crossroads, destruction lurks at every turning.

If never a king dropped out of the clouds, ’tis that never a king flew among them.

The lords of the air are the slaves of the winds.



CONTENT

By James William Callahan

ALL of the gold of the sunset sky,
All of the silver of moonlit sea,
Diamonds of dew and the love of you—
Things that the whole world could not buy—
And these are riches enough for me!

WHAT ELSE BUT A WAG?

By Anne Warwick

"JUST as I was telling Timmie the other night, when a man's serious—and only then—his trouble begins! Well, I must be tripping along; promised to help Sheila give Lady Trot-worthy tea—the dear old soul's mind isn't so light on its feet any more, you know. By-by, Hawley. By-by, Plunkett." Warner threw his coat over his shoulder and departed.

Hawley moved his feet still an inch higher on one of the club's red leather chairs. "Awful good fellow, Warner," he vouchsafed, as intelligibly as his cigar would let him.

"Fine," agreed Plunkett (respectfully speaking, Mr. Knollys Verplanck) from the depths of another red leather chair.

"Er—awfully funny and all that, you know. Keeps things goin'. I don't know what Sheila'd do if it wasn't for Warner, since she has that old English Someone to stop. Nice old lady, y' know, but—well, her mind is a bit heavy on its feet, just as Warner said. Don't know what he'd say if he knew there was another coming tomorrow—another English-woman I mean, but nothing like Lady Trot; Sheila says this one's young and tremendously good-looking. Well, I'm glad—for Warner. He deserves some kind of reward after a week of Lady Trot. Deuced good of him to help Sheila; he's so—so funny, don' che know."

"Very funny," agreed Verplanck again.

"But—but I say, Plunkett"—uneasily the substantial tan boots drew themselves down from comfort, and Hawley's big, solid body bent confidentially toward his friend—"I wouldn't have any of these other chaps hear me, you know,

not for worlds; but I've often wondered—d'ye think Warner's anything *besides* funny, Plunkett? D'ye think—well, what else but a wag is he, eh? I dunno."

"Well, I don't," said Verplanck frankly; and he stared out across the crowded avenue with an expression that paid Warner no little compliment—by its regret. "I tell you candidly, Dev-erance, I've known Jim Warner now for nearly twelve years, and I've never yet heard him say anything but a joke. By George, the other night at Treadham's, when that girl's dress was on fire, I could have *killed* Warner! There the girl was in flames, and Warner, *with his eyes right on her*, sitting still on the other side of the room *telling a funny story!* Why, half the people in the room didn't know she was on fire, even. I tell you, it made me mad—so mad, I've scarcely been civil to Jim since."

"D'you say anything to him about it?" Hawley's cigar had gone out. His big, good-humored face looked almost earnest.

"I told him—I couldn't help telling him—I thought he might have made some pretense at least at aiding the girl, as long as he saw—"

"And what'd he say?"

"He said: 'My dear boy, there were five of you aiding her already. I never deliberately make myself inconspicuous.' Yes, sir, that was just exactly what he said!"

Hawley swore, plentifully. "And d'ye know," he added, plaintive through his disgust, "Sheila told me that was the funniest story she ever heard in her life; told me about it after we got home, and by Gad, it *was* funny! Began with—"

"Oh, of course!" Knollys shook his

shoulders impatiently. "His stories always are funny. He's always funny. He can't help being funny. But great heavens, Hawley, he *can* help being nothing else! It does seem to me that a fellow ought to have something come to him besides a laugh. He's got an almighty fine face."

"Right!" Genuine affection beamed from Hawley's dog eyes. "I—don't you suppose it's rather because he—because there's never been any woman, I mean?" The big "society man" lapsed into sudden shyness. "I think all that—that sort of thing, y' know, makes a tremendous difference, old chap."

The other man met his eyes squarely. "So do I," he said; and it was as though their hands had gripped for the moment. "Yes, I dare say you're right. Warner's never had much to do with women—now I think of it, I've never seen him with one, except Ellen and Sheila, and then only at parties, or when there's some guest to help entertain, like now at your house. Odd, too, for Warner's just the sort that ought to succeed with a woman—"

"Yes," Hawley nodded. "Devilish good-lookin', plenty of money and er—what d'ye call it? Debonair, y' know; um-m, that's it, debonair. Asked Sheila what it meant, and she said the sort of person who could tell you his own tragedy as though it were someone else's. Poor little Sheila! I'll bet she's having her own troubles this afternoon—a tea party and Lady Trot all together—whew! S'pose I'd better run along and help 'em out, what?" He drained his glass regretfully. "Come up for a bit, Plunkett?"

"Thanks"—Knollys, too, was reaching for his hat—"I've to do 'notions' for Ellen: beeswax and binding tape and er—ah, yes—elastic, you know! Pale blue, a yard and—ah and how much, Hawley?" Mr. Verplanck's aristocratic nose wrinkled thoughtfully. "Blessed if I know."

Hawley roared. "Come on up when you've found out," he called, as they left each other at the foot of the club steps. "Warner's sure to have some ripping story for us. 'So—er—so deuced funny, y' know, Warner!'"

II

IN Sheila's charming octagon room an impatient little group of people crowded about someone seated cross-legged on a quaint Chinese stool. "Come, Sheila, do make him! He's such a lazy beggar!"

"And he's had his eternal three cups of tea; there's not a particle of excuse—"

"Warner, you sphinx, unravel! We're waiting these fifteen minutes; why are you invited, d'ye suppose, if not to tell stories? You're no good at all *en tête-à-tête*, you know."

"My dear Mr. Warner"—it was a delightfully ugly old lady in a marvelous tea gown who spoke to him—"I'm afraid you really *must* gratify them. Such noise—and my poor neuralgia—*really!*"

The person on the tabouret raised his careless, attractive face to her, smiling. "You win, Lady Trot! What shall it be, Sheila? Broad farce or screaming tragedy? Nothing so appallingly funny, you know, as a really tremendous tragedy."

"Then tell us one," commanded Sheila—a veritable bit of her own Dresden china, as she glanced at him over the tea cups. She was genuinely fond of Warner, the little society lady; his sense of the dramatic, something told her, made them subtly kin. "Tell us the most awful—and the funniest—tragedy you can think of, Jim—an original one, you know." And Sheila pushed her chair back from the tea table and curled down into it in a luxury of anticipation.

"All right"—Warner's drawl came a bit slower than usual; he was sitting forward, gazing steadily at the fire—"I'll tell you one. It—I'm quite sure it's original, that it's never been told before. Because," he laughed contagiously, looking around at all of them, "it was *my* tragedy, you see!"

"*Yours*—ha, ha!" Everyone was laughing with him, as they drew their chairs into a closer circle. "A tragedy that happened to Jim! That's a good one. Go on, Jim; it starts rippingly!"

Warner balanced a plate of frivolous pink cakes on one of his crossed knees; his eyes, as he regarded them, were full of negligent amusement. "She—that's

the way all tragedies begin, of course—was a bachelor girl, and lived in a flat. Nothing very original about that, but then she was the sort of girl who made the commonplace very nice. She even made me very nice—for a time; at least so people told me. And out of sheer gratitude, I suppose, I—silly ass—fell in love with her."

"Haw, haw!" It was Hawley's large roar that interrupted. He had just come in, and was standing near the door. "Warner in love—that's the best yet! Nothing that chap won't tell for the sake of a story. Funny old Warner!"

"Fact." Warner grinned back at him. "Well, naturally, when I realized the shocking state I was in I set about to pry into the lady's emotions. But *malheureusement*, I found she hadn't any. That is, not for me. There were other men—oh, a disgusting lot of other men—with whom she was shy, coquette, difficult—all the encouraging things, you know; but with me she remained always that frightful neutrality, one's platonic friend. So things went—I mean, stood still. I went to the flat and she came out to dine; and—ah, yes, a pretty touch I had almost forgotten—she always wore a tiny carved jade elephant hung on a fine gold chain about her neck. Lends a neat flavor of the artistic, that elephant, what?" He smiled at the little group whimsically. "Um-m; one night at the Savoy—"

"Ah! It was in London then?" The ugly old lady's beautiful bright eyes betrayed what she thought of London. "You didn't tell us that."

"Of course—in London, five years ago last November. As I said, we were having supper at the Savoy, and she told me she called the elephant Jim. I thought it a crude joke, myself; but I let it pass—I let it pass. He did me no end of good turns after all, that elephant; every time I was on the verge of insanity—blurring the thing, I mean of course, and so losing her for a pal or anything—I seemed to catch that old beast's green eye fixed on me—with the leeriest grin you ever saw. And I swore I'd never be as clumsy as he, no matter if our names were the same."

"Well, to get on to the tragedy." Warner's laugh rang out so delightfully clear that everyone had to join in it; even Sheila, whose adorable butterfly face had been rather serious in its attention. "One dull afternoon I had dropped in to tea, as I did a shocking lot of rainy evenings, and found her in a blue frock—um-m—a delicious frock really—but blue and in a mood to match. After she'd made us each three very bad cups of tea and she generally made very creditable tea, too, for a girl—I said: 'Come, let's have it! Which of them is it—who's bothering you?'"

"For a minute she looked as though she'd like to box my ears—you know the kind of look, when you've just displayed a little perspicacity in someone else's affairs; then, 'It's the one who isn't bothering me,' she said, toying with the little elephant and looking at it in a peculiar sort of fashion. 'The one who hasn't the perception to bother me—or doesn't want to,' she added, in a rather lower voice.

"But who—" I began.

"Never mind," she said. "You know how girls are the minute one begins to be useful. Nothing women hate so much as usefulness; a practical man has absolutely no chance with 'em. I'm absurd even to mention it to you. I hate rainy days—they always make one so absurd. Come, let's try those new songs—"

"Not until you've told me—"

"What? I don't intend to tell you anything," she declared—so firmly that I knew she would end by telling me everything.

"Oh, yes, you do," I said—with that disgusting urbanity which has made all my friends abhor me, more or less—"yes, you do. First of all, what's his name?"

"J-Jack," she stammered. The reason people hate that urbanity is because it's a sort of subtle hypnotic.

"And he—ah, doesn't bother you enough—isn't sufficiently courageous in his attitude of approach, I mean?"

"Oh!" She threw up her hands with a little gesture of abandon. "He's sufficiently courageous, I suppose; but he doesn't *see*. Oh, I don't know why I tell

you all this, but it's gone on so long now—our being just such good pals and all that—it's getting on my nerves frightfully. And then this beastly wet afternoon—' She laughed a bit hysterically. 'Yes, yes; I'll tell you. You see'—she was twisting the jade elephant almost off its chain—'this man I've known for ages—a year at least—and we've done everything together; I've always kept my best jokes for him, and my craziest hopes and plans, and—yes, I'm afraid my worst moods, too. He's never seemed to mind somehow, no matter how disagreeable I've been, and—well, just lately I've found that—that I can't go on being pals, that's all. I daren't even hint to him—I might lose everything, you see; and yet—oh, don't you see, if he *did* care—and was perhaps in exactly my position—I've worn the mask so faithfully. If he *did* care— Oh, Jim'—but she was looking at the clumsy little elephant—'isn't it funny? Isn't it funny—funny—funny?'

"And *'twas* funny," now wasn't it? Nothing so frightfully funny as a real tragedy. Now I—I was just clown enough to snatch at one little raveled end of her story and try to match it up with a ragged corner of mine—that, you see, was where the delicious joke of it came in. Of course I couldn't be sure, but—something said slyly: 'Why, it's you she means, can't you see? It's you, you blessed idiot, and everything's coming out all shipshape.'

"Just the same, one can't believe oneself just offhand like that—it seems so reckless; so I suggested, carelessly, you know, that she bring this tongue-tied impossibility to tea with me next day. In that way, I told her, I could see exactly how things stood—and I meant it more literally than she knew, by a good deal! We'd tea at some gallery—good place, I pointed out, for me to watch this Jack person without his knowing it, and then—by this time my ridiculous tongue was fairly tripping itself up with expectation—she and I would have another talk and decide her next move.

"'Capital!' she pronounced—a bit nervously, I thought at the time. 'If only I can get hold of Jack for tomorrow—'

"'Oh, well, if tomorrow turns out impossible, any day next week will be all right,' I said cheerfully—the burning question being, of course, whether she would find it possible, any day, to produce this 'Jack'—whom, by the way, I was beginning to care for quite foolishly, as one cares for oneself, don't you know! 'Say you meet him at the New at four; have an hour for the pictures—which means anything you want to say to him—while I stroll quietly about after you—unobserved. Then we go to tea *à trois*, and—the game's complete. At tea'—I endeavored to look at her quite impersonally—'I shall try to make you understand just what I think. It's understood?'

"'Yes.' She drew a long breath. 'Yes, I suppose it might as well be tomorrow as any other day. We can't go on as we've been doing, that's certain.'

"'No,' I said—my voice as leading man was quite good in this part, really! 'No,' I said, 'we can't. We must come to some new arrangement tomorrow.'

"But will you believe me, when I said good-bye to her, that detestable elephant acutally leered at me; and for some unaccountable reason I was suddenly furious at his being named Jim. A senseless liberty, I thought it. However, when I was outdoors again and walking home through Regent's Park, I began to think less and less about the elephant, more and more about *her* peculiar nervousness and agitation. The way she'd answered me at first—'It's the one who isn't bothering me—who hasn't the perception to bother me, or doesn't want to'—and all the time looking at that little jade elephant, *whose name was Jim!* Not such a bad elephant after all, I decided.

"Then the way she hesitated when I asked his name: 'J-Jack'—why, of course! She was always the frankest, most absurdly truthful creature; and she had started to say— Ah, it was almost too exquisite, even the hint of it. And—'It's gone on so long now—our being just good pals,' came back to me on leaping little bounds of recollection; and then, 'Oh, don't you see, if he *did*

care—and was perhaps in exactly my position—H'm! There was certainly no one else of whom she could possibly have thought that; no one else who had been shown her 'worst moods' as well as her 'craziest hopes and plans'! My children—Warner passed his plate of pink cakes to each one of them, with an elaborate bow, while his wonderful smiling eyes mocked their gravity—"I assure you that was one of the most remarkable twenty-four hours I have ever spent—from the time I left her till the time I saw her again next afternoon. Those of you who have known the emotion will remember its alternative phases—of leaving one entirely strangled and again curiously hollow. I underwent them both, with breathless rapidity, all night and the next day; and they left me rather weak-kneed and stuttery when I arrived at the gallery at precisely half past four.

"I strolled about and watched the Americans, at the same time keeping a weather eye out for her—and Jack! Awfully amusing, you know, waiting round for one's fate to make up its mind! I never spent such a funny half-hour in my life!

"Then I saw her. And she was alone. And you know, to this day, for the life of me I can't remember what I thought, much less what I said or did, when I saw her—alone—at five o'clock! I do remember she had on another blue gown, some sort of tailored thing, with little lines in it; and those lines danced themselves up and down and round that room till somehow they caught up those tire-some weighted feet of mine and drew me over to her.

"'Jack not here?' I asked—oh, with an enormous carelessness. My voice, once out, sounded so odd, I just asked again to make sure. 'Jack not here?'

"'No—no; that is, not yet. I can't understand,' she went on hurriedly. 'I wrote him a line—rather an absurd line, I'm afraid—and told him if for any reason he couldn't be here to send me a wire. And he didn't send the wire, and I haven't seen anything of him—up till now.'

"'Up till now!' I was grinning like a

fool, trying to remember all I had planned to say, and failing utterly to say anything—until she took the reins and suggested rather faintly that we might as well have tea.

"So we had it; and I gulped mine, and said quite the most brilliant things I've ever said in my life—naturally, since I hadn't an idea what I was talking about—and watched her eat her muffin—which she did with the most frantic deliberation—wishing to goodness she'd finish, so that—well, one certainly could not propose with *the person* eating a muffin!

"At last she did finish, and—I was cold from my head to my feet—I knew it was *the time!* She had given me undivided attention all during tea—gave it me still. Her eyes had never once wandered after someone who might be expected.

"'Dear old girl!'—I had leaned forward to where I could watch her eyes a bit better, when suddenly I saw in them something—something I had never seen before, something I have never seen since in a woman's eyes. It knocked the breath all out of me; you see"—Warner's laugh was the lightest thing in the world—"I thought it was for me, that look. Great joke—for in another second she'd jumped up, run round the other side of the table behind me and held out both hands to—Jack! Some wretched duffer I'd never heard of, he turned out to be; knew her in Paris or somewhere where she'd spent a lot of time. Seems that since he'd come to England people had rather scared him off by tales of *me!* Perf'ly ridiculous, I told him; she told him, too. Absolutely extraordinary! Why, I—I was just old Jim, you know—like the elephant; good old friend—er—pal's the word rather—good old pal and all that, but— Well, so that's the end"—Warner stood up and faced them all, more debonair than ever—"for they lived happily ever after."

"Yes, but—but how did this eccentric young person who preferred someone else to you effect the er—the explanation?" came from Lady Trot's dim corner of the room. "Such extremely quick adjustment, you make it, dear Mr. Warner!"

"'Twas," said Warner blithely. "When I saw him, and he saw her, and she waited to see what he'd say when he saw her, why, I just said it for him, d'ye see? 'You've come to get congratulated, now haven't you?' I accused him. And he half murdered my hand and said that that was about it."

"And then—" It was Sheila, the little society lady, who questioned very softly. But she did not look at Warner.

"Oh, then, having said my piece, I went away and left him to say his. And do you know?"—Warner's drawl was one of exceeding gentleness—"I've always cared for—Jack; like one cares for oneself, you know, the person who should have been oneself. And I'm sure *she* likes him—better than the elephant. Such a clumsy, conceited beast, an elephant!"

He turned to have a laugh with Hawley, who—with singular interest—was still standing by the door, when just then in came Knollys Verplanck, laden

with parcels and a little air of excitement as well. "I've brought you your guest, Sheila," he announced over the heads of some superfluous people. "Her husband deserted her at the door to attend to some luggage, so I offered myself as escort. Their boat got in a bit ahead of time, you see."

With a little rush, Sheila had come forward. "Joan, you *angel*, you wretch, for not sending me a wireless! Oh, where *are* these lights? Turn them on, do, Jim—and then I want you to meet Mrs. Herrington. She's—Oh!" And everyone else in the room drew in their breath involuntarily also, for the lady with whom Warner was shaking hands was dressed in a blue tailored gown. And on a fine gold chain about her neck she wore a tiny carved jade elephant.

And, "Is its name still Jim?" asked Warner gently.

"Awfully funny, Warner," said Knollys to Hawley mechanically.

"Awfully funny," agreed Hawley—a bit uncertainly.



A DARE

By Mildred R. Cram

TELL her, when she kisses you, that I
 Once kissed you more!
 Say to her that every tender sigh
 I've sighed before!
 Tell her of my dusky hair,
 When you say that hers is fair;
 Tell her all she loves I share—
 If you dare!



A MAN never realizes how many faults he has till he has been married a few months.

ES SEBKAH

By Matthew Craig

A PARTY of men, for the most part French officers, smoked and sipped their Turkish coffee on the roof terrace of one of the handsomest dwellings in the small Tunisian city of Bemblah.

It was early afternoon and the gaily striped tent fly gave grateful shade to even these bronzed and hardened sun veterans. They smoked and chaffed with the exuberant volubility, the ready ringing laugh, that seems exaggeration to Anglo-Saxon notions of good-fellowship, and their subject was—for the moment, at least—the eternal, absorbing one.

Little Leclerc's voice dominated. Leclerc was the dapper youngster just out from Saumur, with his *galons* yet fresh as his commission, and the tingling memory of that farewell waltz at the ball *au Cercle Militaire* freshest of all.

"But not at all, not at all," he piped insistently. "I say love without fidelity is not love at all. It is a derision, a monstrosity, a—"

"Just hear him, *le cher innocent!*" genially interrupted De Vrez, surveying Leclerc with leisurely indulgence through the enveloping blue spirals from his *cigarillo*. "Happily, youth is a mistake that the years correct. *Mon petit*"—with exquisite condescension—"you will in time learn some things, and among them that unfaithfulness in love is an anomaly. There is no such thing."

"Hear, hear!" cried the others who gathered, laughing, around the speaker. "A paradox! Good for you! Let's have it, De Vrez," came the pelting from all sides. They were used to De Vrez.

"But certainly there is not," he went on imperturbably. "It is evident." His

gaze followed the soaring smoke wreaths, seeking inspiration. "Every man clings to his love, his ideal, the one thing desired and desirable; and this he pursues with steadfast, even though unconscious, purpose. The means which he selects to attain this good may, of course, assume varying forms of beauty and seduction. But it is always the one underlying love he seeks, which each man creates for himself and to which necessarily he is loyal. Woman, my brothers, is the fetiche upon which we hang the splendors of our own imperishable longings. You see, it is a question merely of brain, imagination, temperament. And that is why men—Leclerc, I'm not speaking now of youngsters—why men may love several women intensely, sincerely even, and at the same time."

A babel of laughing protest interrupted him. "No, no! Rubbish! Rot! Stop him, you fellows," called out Antoninus, spinning his matchbox at the speaker from his distant corner.

De Vrez caught the matches and smiled sweetly at Antoninus. "Even so, my children," he proceeded dispassionately. "They, women, are—let me see—the divinely attuned instruments, I shall say, differing in kind, if you will, yet alike in responsive melody, by which we attain to the grand harmony that is each man's own rhapsody of love."

"Bravo!" There was a general laugh and shrug. Antoninus flicked his ash a trifle absently. Little Leclerc turned his shoulder in disgust.

"*Va, roué!*" he exclaimed.

"*Roué?*" indignantly from De Vrez. "But not in the least. Idealist, yes. Besides, Leclerc," he interjected se-

verely, "you've no business whatever to mix in the serious talk of grown-ups. Better stop it." He turned to the others. "I love beauty, as you do, wherever I find it. I follow it with simplicity, with sincerity even and passion, and I find it—everywhere. And in this I maintain there is disloyalty to none. On the contrary, there is eternal fidelity to all."

But here they fell upon him, and their voices reached to the front of the house and to the latticed balcony that hung like a painted bird cage over the narrow street, causing the two women seated there to smile involuntarily.

They, too, had their coffee, in tiny *sarfs*, beside them on the low, inlaid table, and one held a perfumed cigarette between her rose-tipped, jeweled fingers. It was Madame Saintaubrey, the commandant's wife. Her small Latin head with its lustrous crown of dark hair rested lightly against the crimson cushion, and the billowy masses of some diaphanous, etherealized raiment surged about her as she lounged low in her basket chair.

The other woman, Cecilly de Vrez, was taller than her friend and fair, a lily of the North, with a wonderful corolla of spun gold folded about her placid forehead. Her splendid, leisurely figure, from throat to heel, was "clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful," a veritable clinging silken sheath and sheen of white. Her eyes were like dewy violets, and held a shining light, as woodland pools hold the summer sky. And when she spoke, her faultless French still gave out the aroma of the North, the subtle accent, stamp and seal of the cultured Anglo-Saxon, as it was the ardent envy of her Parisian friends.

For the moment talk between them had dropped into the delicious drowse of the sun-steeped day that filtered through the half-raised lattices. The hush of the noonday siesta still wrapped the little town. The inaudible lapping of the sea, the brush of insect life and rustle of quivering heat rays that form the vast hinterland between sound and silence made an irresistible lullaby. Madame Saintaubrey's eyes closed.

Cecilly glanced sleepily into the narrow street.

A man had just seated himself on the doorstep of the low white *marabout*, or saint's shrine, directly below and facing the balcony. He was unusually tall and muscular, and ebony black, a pure breed Ethiopian on whom the high lights touch off purple in the inky mask of even color. And he was an old man, though his spare and sinewy figure was erect as a date palm and as supple.

The earmarks of the irreducible tramp, albeit a holy one, are the same in every country. That this one belonged to the brotherhood whose arduous pilgrimage to Mecca has earned each one the right to the envied title of *El Hadj*, the pilgrim, was further evidenced by the heavy *sebkah*, or rosary, that hung from his neck, its ninety-nine beads fashioned of sacred clay from the Prophet's tomb, falling low upon his polished breast. With deliberation he unwound the many folds of his dust-stained *haik*, unslung his heavy scrip, his large flat bottle of undressed kid skin and, with a practised kick dexterously deposited his shapeless *pabouches* neatly in one corner, displaying, in so doing, a pair of lean shanks that might have been incased in black silk stockings so atramental were they even through their copious powdering of white dust. He seated himself finally in the comfortable angle of the doorway. Closing his eyes, he apparently gave himself over to the pleasing process of repose, a citizen of the world and a philosopher.

From the covert of her slanting lattice Cecilly watched him delightedly.

"El Hadj," she half murmured; "I'm so glad to see the old dear back again."

Madame Saintaubrey came out of her billowy lethargy enough to throw a casual glance into the street. She lifted her eyebrows questioningly.

"Yes, my old Hadj," confirmed Cecilly; "my mascot, I call him. Oh, for all I know he may be the dusky spirit of the holy *marabout* in the doorway of whose shrine he elects to make his periodic apparitions. Whence he comes, whither he goes, I'm sure I can't tell. Nobody can. 'He sleepeth under the

shadow' there, as you see him, then silently steals away like the Arab that he is. That is all I really know about him. But the interesting feature to me personally is that his visits invariably coincide with some pleasant happening, some special good fortune to myself. What a canvas for the Salon he would make, Paulette!"

Madame Saintaubrey looked critically at the free lines of the inscrutable ebony figure and nodded absently. "You seem to be old friends," she said after a moment, interested and rather amused.

"We are. Wait; you shall see for yourself." Cecilly sharply clapped her hands, and to the white-lined Arab boy who was there directly, "Hassan," she said, "tell Ali here's El Hadj again."

The boy disappeared. Presently they saw him below cross the street and respectfully exchange a few words with the Ethiopian. Taking his bottle and scrip, he came back into the house and returned shortly, bringing them replenished with oil and bread and dates. El Hadj lifted his glittering eyes to where Cecilly nodded to him brightly. She leaned out and pushed the lattice up another notch.

At once he arose impressively to his splendid stature. With a wide gesture that an envoy of Sheba's queen might have used at the court of Solomon and been proud of, he brought his hand to his heart, then lips and forehead, while he voiced his low sequence of profuse thanks, a sort of litany of gratitude; which ritual terminated, once more he sank back into the plastic immobility of his rest and rags.

Madame Saintaubrey looked interested. She took up her hanging coin purse, but Cecilly threw out a detaining hand.

"No, no, *please*. Would you affront him?" reproachfully. "Why, he has the riches of the world, having not a penny—the fulfillment of all things, having no desires. Paulette, do you really not see the poetry of my Hadj?"

Her friend lightly shrugged her shoulders and rolled another cigarette.

"Nothing will ever cure you, *chérie*,"

she said. "You were always a bit eccentric. All English are. It's so like you to idealize, poetize an old negro beggar. For my part, I envy you this gift of getting something, a sensation, out of everything. It's an art, I assure you."

Here De Vrez joined them.

"You are not really talking art this hot afternoon," he said, "and with no men here to give testimony! Another of my mistakes about the sex corrected, and almost the last, too. At present it touches perfection."

"*Mauvais sujet*," smiled back Madame Saintaubrey. "Come look at this latest masterpiece, and then blame us."

De Vrez came behind Cecilly's chair and looked down where she indicated. But at sight of the sleeping pilgrim he drew back quickly, though quietly, into the shadow, and a swift color empurpled his face. Neither woman noticed it, however, and he had time to recover before answering Cecilly's question.

"Seen him before? Oh, yes, in the streets and mosques. Everybody knows El Hadj by sight. He's a rather decent old beggar, I believe, and the Arabs have a certain consideration for him."

"Well, *we* are old friends," declared Cecilly, "and he is my mascot, though he doesn't suspect the fact."

De Vrez looked puzzled and raised his eyebrows questioningly. He did not, however, leave his place in the background.

Madame Saintaubrey answered De Vrez's look.

"Yes, Cecilly's latest flirtation. She welcomes his coming with joy, as the harbinger of bliss to her."

De Vrez bit his lip, and again the color deepened under his bronzed skin. He made an involuntary movement that was almost tender toward Cecilly. But he covered it at once by taking her hand and laughingly raising it to his lips.

"My compliments on your latest conquest. 'Out of all peoples and tongues and tribes,'" he quoted.

"I'm only curious now, Cecilly," said Madame Saintaubrey, "to witness the fulfillment of his prophetic presence, the

'pleasant happening' you say is to befall you."

Cecilly smiled, rising. "It is already here—your visit," she said, with the ready sweetness that was part of her. Paulette drew a caressing arm about her, but into De Vrez's face came a sudden look of pain. He followed them with downcast eyes as they left the balcony, and El Hadj slept on in the shade. But in appearance only. Warily, between slatted lids, he noted all that passed in the street, though he had not seen De Vrez in the balcony.

Soon the voices from the terrace ceased, and the laughing, white-ducked men came noisily out. They turned toward the city gate not a hundred yards off, and as they did so De Vrez flashed an imperceptible sign to the motionless pilgrim.

When they had passed out El Hadj opened his eyes. He rose, nonchalantly gathering his belongings, re-integrated his *pabouches* and slowly retraced his way in the opposite direction. After a dozen yards he came to a projection of the wall which cut off here into a long, tunnelliike passage under the lofty house that spanned the way. He turned the angle sharply and with feline quickness disappeared at once under the deep shadows of the arch.

At the same time, the tall, high stepping figure of De Vrez came back through the gate and quickly on down the street. He kept well in the shade of the houses, passing close under the latticed balcony, and further on entered the Moorish café, empty at this hour. He nodded to the sleepy *kawaji*.

"Matches, Mifta," he said, throwing down a *karoub*. He came out, loitering over his light, and continued for several yards. Reaching the projecting wall, he, too, abruptly vanished in his turn.

"Well?" he demanded sternly in Arabic, though his voice was guarded. "A'selammah, y'Arfi. Greeting, O my master," said El Hadj.

He thrust a tiny *sebkah* of carved aloes wood into the other's hand. "It is from her. She said you would listen as before—that you would understand." The man's voice held a strange wistful-

ness that contrasted curiously with the menace of his glittering eyes.

De Vrez made a quick protesting movement. But he knew the old man had little relish for his present mission. It was devotion alone to the capricious will of another that made him a reluctant tool in this. De Vrez's fingers closed nervously, impatiently about the beads. He paused to think. The warmth of his hand seemed to bring out some subtle, well remembered perfume—as it were the pungent soul of the wood—that caressed his senses like a passing breath. It checked the quick retort on his lips, and his voice was gentler when he spoke again.

"M'hamud, listen; it is useless. This must end; I have said so before. I have even told her so, many times. But she is a child and will not understand. You are a man, and you know that what is said is said. Enough."

"I know it, y'Arfi, and I too have told her. But then she is unhappy, the little one, and—I cannot see her weep. Yet this once, y'Arfi." The man's voice was almost tender in its pleading. "Only this once. It is for the last time. I swear it; Zeneb swears it. *Rhoabi, rhoabi!*" He raised his hands solemnly.

De Vrez was touched, and he hesitated. He was thinking hard, and reason fortified him in crushing the sudden tug he felt at his heartstrings. He was about to return the rosary to the pilgrim when the donkey bell of a water carrier sounded through the other end of the passage. Not caring to encounter prying eyes, he hastily dropped it, instead, into his pocket.

"Well, then, tell her I will bring it," he said briefly, and, turning quickly, he stepped out again into the sunlight of the awakening street.

Half an hour later he had handed Madame Saintaubrey into her victoria and was facing Cecilly, where she stretched in the low swung hammock amid the sunset-sweetened odors of her roof garden.

She was watching the blue of the ever present sea take on its evening blush of violet, and the radiance of the softening sky reflected and illumined the light of

happiness in her face. A furtive dimple lurked about the wayward corners of her fresh, full lips. The violets of her glistering eyes purpled into velvet pansies beneath the shade of their curved lashes.

To De Vrez she had never seemed lovelier—not even in those first days when he had wooed and won her. He was not given to any serious analysis of the affections; few men are, especially married men. He only felt and rejoiced in the immense heart rest her love brought him. It enfolded him, as a golden aura. Like the Prophet's burning bush on Horeb, it burned without consuming, purifying while it raged the fiercest, holiest then, for forth from it came the Creator's voice. Such was married love interpreted by the high priestess that at times was Cecilly. And he was grateful to her with almost reverent lowliness for the new meaning she had given to his life. It seemed to him it must always be this way, that the outstretching years would continue to add link to link in the diadem of his love and worship about her silvering head. He did not know that to few of us is it given to dwell upon the heights, although from time to time we may reach, and even briefly tread, within the empyrean threshold.

But De Vrez did not probe to the centers of emotional analysis. Nor, like many of his temperament, was he above talking for the gallery, of throwing about the splendid small coin of his neurotic improvisations for their benefit. He did not reflect that this habit of providing clever sophisms out of hand would furnish ready forged weapons to throttle him in his hour of weakness. But with him, as with many, the neurotic jargon was largely a pose, one that went well with a dinner coat, and that good form abandoned with cigars before joining the women in the drawing-room.

Yet, with much apparent complexity, De Vrez was essentially rudimentary in his ethical equipment. With old Terence's Chremes, he was a man, and primarily responsive to all phases of humanity, a being of the hourly sensation. "And this African country is the very

deuce for sensations," was his own extenuating conclusion.

He came now behind Cecilly and took her golden head between his hands, stooping his lips to her forehead in a long caress. Impulsively she caught his hand and laid it close against her warm, round cheek. Drawing him around, she gently pulled him to the low seat beside her. There was a long pause. As Madame de Staël says somewhere, "speech was not their language." A distant cry clove the air, the strident tremolo of the Arab women *en fête*, and was followed by the deep throb of a tom-tom. Some women were dancing over in the soldiers' quarter by the *kasbah*.

"You aren't driving this evening?" De Vrez at length asked.

"No," she smiled, "I am just lazy, happy, swinging here alone, but 'under the walls of Paradise' because *you* are here."

His eyes shone back their happiness and gratitude into hers. He reached over and took the slender, satin-shod foot into the warm shelter of his palms, and, stooping, the aloes *sebkah* slid out of his pocket to the floor. He had forgotten it. As an adder thrusts its fang from a rose, came the jar of its intrusive presence now.

Cecilly held out her hand as he picked it up.

"A *sebkah*," she said, examining it; "how pretty! Where did you get it? I have always wanted one of aloes wood. Aloes, they say, brings one's heart's desire."

"Then you shall have it. But I will get you a larger one; this is too small. And the carving is not even." He took the beads she held out to him. His forehead sombered at the obtrusive incident at the call to attention and the promise it stood for. And with the rasp came the swift resolve to have it over—this last act of the episode he stood pledged now to see to the finish. As usual he took action at once.

"I've been thinking over that affair with Pariente," he said quietly; "you remember? I've concluded that, after all, it's best to see him myself, and the

sooner I go to Sousse, perhaps, the better. Tiresome, isn't it? There's a late moon tonight. If I start early now, I shall be able to get back tomorrow before the heat. What do you say, sweet?"

"I say yes, by all means." Cecilly was used to this nocturnal activity which the long, hot days often made necessary.

So De Vrez clapped his hands and gave the requisite orders for his horse, looking himself to the state of his fire-arms. And after their usual dainty dinner on the flowering terrace beneath the royal purple of the Tunisian sky, he kissed Cecilly and rode off under the stars, her white hand through the lattice fluttering its farewell, like a dove in the darkness, as he turned in his saddle at the city gate.

He pushed along at a round pace over the broad, white road to Sousse. When he had covered nearly seven miles he struck off into a narrow bridle path almost hidden between high cactus hedges, and as he did so his horse whinnied its recognition. The path was only broad enough for a laden camel to pass easily. The steep clay sides and towering cactus left it inky black, save for the slender, guiding thread of sky that wound between the thick foliage top. De Vrez changed his pistols from their saddle holsters to his pocket, and gave his Arab a loose bridle. Alert as he was, and had need to be, his mind was madly working, as memory dragged him back. Unconsciously now he was pressing on with the old eagerness along the old trail. Was it with the desire alone "to have it over," as he kept insisting to himself? Then, happening to brush the *sebkah* in his breast pocket, he suddenly forgot to demand of himself account, or to give any. Everything slipped from him into the oblivion of the hurrying night, everything save Zeneb. Honor, duty, what place had they with her—with the wild and fragrant cactus rose, the witching, winsome, firefly sprite called Zeneb? Before him in the narrow way her beauty danced, beckoning, alluring, elusive. A great longing swept through him that shook him as the wild sirocco whips the helpless palm tops in its hot grasp, the

longing but once again to hear the low laughter of her welcome, to watch once more the glorious lovelight leap into the somber stars of her eyes, to crush to his lips as of old the purple nectar of this, his beautiful ripe cluster of grapes.*

But here a rift of something like reason broke through the passion-tossed clouds of his soul. He wiped the drops from his forehead. Surely he must be mad. He drew in a long, long breath of the fresh night air, while the tumult of his pounding heart made him wince as if with pain.

He lifted his haggard face to the serene, inscrutable stars. Behind their seeming calm was the onrush of the suns. He would turn back. He wheeled his Arab in the narrow space. No, he should give Zeneb her *sebkah*; he owed her that. In the little garden under the flowering orange trees he would tell her—what? That it was the end, the very end of—an Arabian night that was spent, for him—of all things, for her. As he rode on did the burning stars know better?

The deep-throated bay of an Arab wolfhound told him he was there. The black cactus fell away, and before him the white roofline of a low villa shone through the olive trees. He dismounted drawing his bridle over his arm, and struck gently with his crop on the rounded door in the long, rambling wall. At once a voice on the house top quieted the dog, and in a moment a bright-eyed negro boy opened the door. He grinned in delighted recognition as he took the bridle De Vrez threw him, and securing the door, followed with alacrity as he strode unhesitatingly into the softened incertitude of the garden.

He knew it well, the low cistern's white, flat line, the flowering almonds in the corner yonder with outstretched, spectral branches, the white-flagged, well worn walk that shone like a winding water sluice in the moonlight, the fresh, dank earth tang that underlay the heavy flower scents. His spirit grew faint. The orange trees drenched the night with their perfume. The stealthy swish

*Zeneb is an Arabic word for a bunch of black grapes.

of their falling petals made whispered harmonies where they spread their immaculateness under foot.

An old negress came out from a side bosquet, her face a glow of welcome. It was Zuleika, El Hadj's wife. She kissed his hand as he gave her his cloak and helmet.

"Thrice, O master, does thy servant salute thee. Many moons have chased the gloom of our garden since thou hast visited it. The robins have nested and flown away. The pomegranates—"

"Yes, yes, my good Zuleika." He was not listening. He pressed a coin into her hand mechanically. With a kind smile he hurried on, guided by the smothered sob of a tom-tom. He reached the orange bower, a fairy-fashioned shrine of silver in the moonlight, and here he found Zeneb.

With a startled, ringing cry she rose. In a whirr of swift onrushing garments she was upon him, had thrown herself at his feet and was kissing his hands and knees in an ecstasy of clinging delight.

"Y'Arfi, O my master!" was all that came in a ripple of sobs and laughter from her warm young lips.

"My Zeneb!" De Vrez raised her tenderly and held her against his heart. A mist was before his eyes. He looked long into the delicate, uplifted face, wanly sculptural in the moonlight. It seemed to hold lines of some newly acquired beauty. There were slender violet shadows where the sweeping lashes met the rounded cheek. Slowly and with infinite tenderness he kissed her on the forehead where the heavy hair parted. Then he pushed her gently from him. His resolution—he must, he *would* not forget his resolution. He turned from her.

God, but the night was hot! He threw himself on the low bench. The cool, hard stone seemed the one thing tangible in the molten moonlight. The odorous insistence of the orange flowers maddened him. Automatically he drew the *sebkah* from his pocket.

"Zeneb, child—" he began, raising his tired glance to hers.

She was standing, startled and irresolute, where he had left her. Her lip

trembled like that of a chidden child at his evident repulse. He saw the eager life die out of her sweet face. Two tears gathered under the lowered lashes, brimmed and dropped into the ivory haven of her breast. But now at his voice she shyly raised her drooping head. Seeing the beads, she softly clapped her henna-tipped hands.

"My *sebkah*! Oh, the blessed, thrice loved *sebkah* that brings you again to me—even to me, your Zeneb! But it is true; unworthy am I of my lord's least glance."

She stretched out her white arms to him with irresistible longing, but quickly drew them back.

"No, stay. I myself shall fetch the little *sebkah*—that brings to me my heart's desire. See, I shall seek it in your palm, and then, once again, your dear hand shall place it on the shrine of my heart." She looked at him and laughed low, like a mischievous sprite, and De Vrez laughed back at her out of sheer happiness. She held his eyes with hers; and looking still, they changed, beautifully, languorously, and their slow glory caught him up and wrapped him about as in a mantle of warmth and penetrating tenderness.

She was moving imperceptibly, harmoniously. It was little more than a suggested rhythm, a pulsing of the slender torso to the slow repeated movement of her tiny arched feet. The heavy silver anklets clinked softly in metallic cadence and the white uplifted arms made a lily sheath behind the ebony head.

For she was dancing now, the bridal dance—he knew it well—learned by the girls of Islam from their infancy. And suddenly De Vrez ceased to struggle. What was the use? And with the snapping of his will a deep content settled on him, the spell of the old thrall. His heart leaped and exulted now in the sheer sensuous joy and meaning of life, in the large prodigality of nature's response to the creature's demands, in the fullness of his own part in the inheritance of the ages.

He reached out for the tiny tom-tom, and strummed in padded, syncopated throbs to the rise and fall of the ivory

feet. Gradually the measure warmed and quickened; the rhythmic motion gained. Transformed now, with head thrown back and parted lips and swift rose flushes chasing over face and neck and heaving breast, Zeneb swayed in unimaginable witchery of motion. The inexpressible grace and fire and appeal of the sinuous, girlish figure grew with the crescendo of the dance. Her exquisite changing face glowed into his. Like the incarnation of undying youth she moved before him. From the fathomless treasure store of supernal spring she seemed to draw and radiate on him her love, shy then provoking, abashed, now yielding and disarmed; while from the tender mystery of the half-closed lids her curtained eyes sent into his two narrow shafts, imperative, compelling, drawing to response his very soul. The white petals rained their velvet perfume on her. The silver moonlight turned to flooded gold. The orange flower odor caught his reeling senses with its cloying sweet.

She was nearer now. He smiled back at her through the mazed rapture of the dance. The passion and desire and abandon of the whole lithe young body quickened. Its gracile strength and suppleness wooed him with auroral rosy promise, then again receded, mysterious, distant, cold as if breathed upon by some boreal wind. But nearer, ever nearer; he could cull the distilled fragrance of her smile—until with languorous, fainting, suffused face she hung, sweet as life itself, within his thrilling reach, no mist dissolvent dream sprite now, but a radiant, exquisite, womanly reality!

He stretched up triumphant arms and the tom-tom fell broken to the ground.

Cecily awoke in the night with the white moonlight flooding through the open *patio* into the parted curtains at her door.

An oppression that was almost fear seemed to weight her limbs. A seething as of rushing waters filled her arteries. In a far corner the rose light of the night lamp burned calmly on.

She clapped her hands softly.

"*Y'oum oui*—O my mother; *y'oum oui Fat'ma!*" she called.

The old woman was by her side directly.

"I am frightened, Fat'ma. Has anything happened?"

"*La, la, Mart-arfi*; nay, nay, wife of the master, what could happen? There is no cause for fear." The woman's voice was soothing as though talking to a child. "Besides, am I not here? There, there!" She took Cecily's hand in hers tenderly and felt the hurried pulse, then filled a small glass of orange flower water and made her drink.

"It is warm here, my mother," said Cecily. "I will go into the *patio*." The air outside was like a draft of amber wine. "I think I will sleep here, *y'oum oui*," she said. So Mother Fat'ma settled her with fondling care on the soft, low couch and lay down herself on the rug at her feet, gently stroking her mistress's hand with slow, even movement to induce sleep.

But Cecily did not sleep. Her senses were keenly alert. Quite reassured now, she lay luxuriously and looked up into the illumined night, letting her happy thoughts soar. Higher and higher they seemed to go, in a strange buoyancy of vagrant, sweet abandon. Upward, outward, her disembodied spirit seemed to reach, and then with open eyes she had a vision, for somewhere out of the living deeps a sudden consciousness gathered to her. A while it poised, then dropped into her soul.

It seemed to her alert and widened vision that the Angel of Life planed with outstretched wings above her. The night spaces were filled with his presence. Lower he sank and lower, until he seemed to catch her up within the enfolding shelter of his rushing pinions. She closed her eyes. Realities slipped from her. To her existence itself hung like an arrested pendulum while she tried to seize and fasten the intense and thrilling meaning. Then up through the dripping moonlight she stretched out her arms.

"Yes, yes," she breathed, "I am ready." And her words were a prayer and an acceptance.

Presently her sense of touching earth again came back to her—but a changed earth, how immeasurably dear and beautified! She thought of De Vrez. Her love for him took on a wholly different meaning, intensified a thousand times, yet apart forever now from any sensible manifestation. After a long time she fell asleep smiling happily, and Mother Fat'ma continued softly to stroke her hand.

Her mascot had fulfilled his coming.

It was a long time before El Hadj was seen again in his doorway niche—so long, indeed, that those who noted the Ethiopian's periodic visits concluded he had gone once more to Mecca, the wanderlust—or was it the primeval desire of making a record?—growing stronger, as everyone knows, with each journey to the Prophet's tomb.

But El Hadj was also old, just how old, after the manner of Arabs, no one knew, himself least of all. "God keeps count," is their ritualistic reply to this venturesome question, which undoubtedly saves the Recording Angel's fair page from blots. So it seemed not improbable that the ancient pilgrim may have set out on his final journey, this time to the Prophet's seven-stepped throne.

Cecilly missed her mascot. But she had been too engrossed by the happenings in her own life to give more than a kindly thought of regret to the old man.

One dull November day, however, she again saw his familiar form on the *marabout* doorstep. She did not at once notice that he was worn and stooped, and that his gait was slow and feeble. His face, too, was pale, like the gray of a window pane before a darkened chamber.

She waved her hand cheerily to him as usual, and calling Fat'ma, she took her baby into her arms and, smiling, raised it for the old man to see.

His wan face lighted into instant pleasure. With fervid volubility he launched into the interminable string of compliments suited to the occasion, that includes every invocation known in the vernacular—and they are many—not to mention the ninety-nine appella-

tions of Allah, each conferring its own specific blessing.

His genuine delight touched Cecilly strangely. Then the contrast happened. Seized evidently by some disquieting misgiving, he broke off abruptly.

"*Mart-arfi*"—his anxiety was painful—"haëka benayah? Is it a girl?" She laughed merrily at his sheepish discomfiture and hastened to reassure him.

"La la," she said; "*haëka ouled, ouledhi serirha*. No, no; this is a boy, my little boy baby;" and she hugged the little cheek to hers. Satisfied upon this vital point, El Hadj was free to smile back.

He seated himself once more, looking at Cecilly and the child, and a glad thrill of sympathy brought a mist to his old eyes as the picture of a garden came before him, a sunny garden where a girl crooned a lullaby under the flowering orange trees. His love for her, for Zeneb, his foster child, was the unique beauty, the crowning compensation of his solitary, roaming life. He recalled the time when, already an old man, he had guided her father, his young master, on his pilgrimage to Mecca, only to nurse and finally bury him in the sacred city. He had hurried home bearing the dying man's last message to his stricken wife and little daughter.

The young mother did not long survive her loss. With unerring maternal instinct she confided to the faithful black her little Zeneb and the modest remnant of their fortune. Reverently and loyally had he discharged the sacred trust. Attended by her foster mother, El Hadj's wife, the little Zeneb continued to live in her father's house amid the orange groves, its unquestioned mistress. Here, idolized and ruling with dimpled despotism, she had grown to girlhood, unfolding like the flowers about her into luxuriant, impulsive, wayward loveliness in the fostering warmth of the old couple's undisciplining affection.

Her glowing presence was as the touch of spring to the tired El Hadj, as the breath of the south wind to his chilling heart. He lived to serve her. She loved De Vrez, and De Vrez was a *Roumi*. That was bad. But in his

travels El Hadj had seen many *Roumis*, and he knew they were, in the main, good to their women. De Vrez might even marry her, since she loved him. That, of course, was against the *olim's* teaching and should not be counseled, but what could El Hadj do where Zeneb was concerned? Before her will he was as Sahara's driven sands, as the nodding bamboo shoots on Zagouhan.

It is true he had protested when she sent him latterly in quest of De Vrez—formerly there was scant need to seek him. "He is growing tired," the old man thought in his primal knowledge of the ways of men. And he fiercely resented the implied slight to his idol even while he secretly jubilated thereat. For the practice of Islam is lax enough even if its laws are taut drawn. But now, in the passionate flood of her love and triumph, these nicer considerations of his religious scruples were swept down. Before this new situation, so overwhelmingly important in the Moslem idea, even the *Roumi's* hesitation must succumb.

Strange as it may seem, while El Hadj, who had known De Vrez now some time, knew generally where to find him, his hours in the café and at the mess, he was yet unaware that he had married and that his was the large house facing the *marabout*. Cecilly's was one of the many fair faces that came and went with the shifting life of the garrison. From the high niche of her latticed balcony she smiled down to him as might some radiant *hourî* of the Prophet's promise.

Motherhood now gave her, to his Moslem mind, the needed touch of womanliness. His pious thought reverted to Miriam, the fair-haired mother of the lord Issa, and then once more to Zeneb. She, too, was crowned a woman, his beautiful, his cherished one. Surely when he knew it the master, too, would rejoice.

A little longer and the short November day would be over. With the sun's decline a chill had come into the air.

All day El Hadj had kept his watch for De Vrez, who had not seemed to come and go as usual in the busy thor-

oughfares. A shaft of light from the house struck across the street to where El Hadj sat patiently. It reminded him that it was late. De Vrez would surely be now in one of the cafés.

The old man gathered up his staff and scrip and glanced again with a parting smile and benediction into the lighted room opposite. And standing, the smile stiffened on his lips. At what he saw he reeled as if struck by a sudden blow out of the darkness. In the center of the wide rose disc of light from the shaded lamp Cecilly sat on a low couch, and beside her was the man he sought. He pressed her golden head against his breast, then stooped to kiss the baby in her lap.

With a snarling bound El Hadj leaped forward. *He, he* her husband! It was not so. He clutched to free his choking throat. Baffled, he stared, while a slow and deadly menace gathered to his glittering eyes.

"*Y'Kelb*," he ground between tight teeth. "You dog of a *Roumi*! O Allah!" His whole lithe body quivered with awakened savagery.

One agile leap, one lightning blow from his heavy staff, and De Vrez would stretch a shapeless mass at his feet. He crouched low, with stealthy move and tigerish intent. The swelling muscles of his neck stood out and his deep chest bulged as he gathered himself for his spring, not a yard from the open window. And in that instant Cecilly's baby cooed, a full gurgle of soft content. The universal tender cry—the primeval sylvan note of the young of his kind—called instant, instinctive echo to the forest man within him. It smote his murderous purpose as a sunray splits the storm. A shiver seized him and the wild eyes glazed. A second he stood uncertain, stricken, then crumbling, cowered. Sinking his face deep in the folds of his tattered *haik*, he fell back limply to the step. Oh, Zeneb, little Zeneb! What thing was this he had all but done in his love for thee?

"*M'naref, m'naref*," he wailed brokenly. "I did not know, *Mart-ari*; I did not know," and he groped blindly for his staff.

A sudden gust of wind, outrider of the storm, caught the long end of his *haik* as he passed before the house. Its flutter drew Cecilly's quick eye.

"It is El Hadj," she said, coming to the window and recognizing the swaying, buffeted figure as he went feebly through the gathering gloom.

"Quick, quick, Hassan!" She caught up a thick, warm *haik* from the couch and thrust it into the boy's hands. "Run after him before he reaches the gate. It is cold tonight; make him put this on. Tell him I, *Mart-arfi*, say so. And Hassan," she called him back, "tell him the *haik* is a present from the little master—from baby. Be sure to make him understand that."

The first heavy drops of rain splashed against the window as De Vrez closed it.

In a few minutes the boy was back. "Yes, *Mart-arfi*," he reported, "El Hadj took the warm *haik*. He also put it on. His jaws clacked badly with the cold. Also he understood, and he invoked the threefold blessing of Allah, of our lord Mohammed and of Sidi Issa ben Miriam upon the little master and upon *Mart-arfi*."

Cecilly nodded. "Good!" Then, seeing that the boy still lingered: "Was there something else, Hassan?" she asked.

"There was, *Mart-arfi*. After that El Hadj mumbled to himself strange words that mean nothing. What words? 'No, I will not tell him. Forgive me, my little one, but I cannot; he shall never know'—words that have no sense." The boy paused. Then, "I do not think El Hadj can be in health," he concluded gravely.

And indeed it would seem that Hassan was right.

Like to the storm-tossed clouds El Hadj buffeted through the long November night, driven by the surging conflict of his untutored soul. Into the swaying darkness, the fitful bursts of chilling rain, he carried his anguish and strove with it as the strong man grips his foe. There were no years of early guidance and habit, no training in polemics, nor ready-to-hand code of ethics to uphold

him in his hour of need. Only the ungarbed, elemental truths stood out plain to his primitive rectitude. With the sure feeling and logic of the simple upright, this black, unlettered follower of a semi-barbaric teaching knew where right lay. With robust will, unweakened by the sophisms of a higher civilization, he chose it.

He would not tell De Vrez, that was all. He could not trust the *Roumi's* swift remorse, with perhaps its bungling impulse to tardy reparation. El Hadj knew well the tragedy this would mean in Cecilly's serene life, the crushing of her ideals, the eternal profanation of her love. So Cecilly must never know. Besides, her right was first; her son was first born in his father's house.

His little Zeneb would croon her lullabies in the sunny garden. Her tears would fall upon her baby's little hands, but not for long. The tiny arms would strengthen about her neck, pushing away De Vrez surely from his mother's breast. And the years would bring love once more and other childish voices into her smiling life. It was the way of Islam. Nature gives large compensation to her children who remain close to her. El Hadj foresaw it all.

But he could not face her now, her tears, her supplication. Moreover, he could never see her—and the old man groaned in utter anguish—no, never again, as he hoped to keep to his resolve, could he see his little one. De Vrez must not know, and that he should not know El Hadj must go—where? Out into the weariness of his wanderings once more. His pilgrimage was not yet ended.

He stumbled on unheeding in the darkness. The late winter dawn found him many miles from Bemblah. In the gray raw light he knew not what village he had reached. His pilgrim's instinct guided him to the village *marabout*, the resting place for travelers. Mechanically he seated himself on the well worn step, footsore, weary, weakened, for he felt anew the burden of his years. Feebly he unslung his gourd and scrip and hung them to the door. He had no wish to eat. He closed his eyes, and the rising sun's pale rays struck their feeble

warmth across his chilled figure. Presently he smiled. It was Zeneb's happy lullaby he heard.

Later they found the old pilgrim there, dead. Wrapped about him was a new

haik. Half of it they left him for his winding sheet, and the other half paid the bier bearers. But they left, where they found it, clasped to his heart, a carved *sebkah* of aloes wood.



SEPARATION

By Mrs. Poultney Bigelow

OH, the springs that we shall never see together—
 With the verdure creeping softly o'er the hills
 With the hyacinths as blue as summer weather,
 And the butterflies poised in the daffodils!

I wonder, is your country any fairer?
 Do you revel, too, in flowers, bird and tree?
 In your spring I long to be a sharer—
 For how can you be happy, wanting me?



AS SOME THINK

By Mrs. J. J. O'Connell

IT is a sin to steal a pin,
 But 'tis no crime,
 When one is broke, to use a joke
 A second time.



POLITE conversation is the art of exchanging opinions of no value on subjects of no interest.

M. LE CURÉ

Par Henri Duvernois

C'ÉTAIT un brave homme de petit cabot, pénétré du vif sentiment de son art, dénué de tout talent, mais dévoré par une flamme ambitieuse. Dès sa sortie du Conservatoire, il avait épousé Michèle Aubrac, une camarade qui se préparait à vivre le roman comique en province. Quand Michèle, qui était douce, et vertueuse, et timide, et de la race de ces comédiennes qui jouent les duègnes à vingt-cinq ans, fut devenue Mme Bousseuille, elle tint ce langage à son mari :

— Ecoute, mon Auguste chéri, je voudrais bien renoncer au théâtre et me contenter de faire ta popote le mieux possible. Ne me parle pas d'art; je ne suis pas une artiste; je t'aime, un point, c'est tout, et je me contenterai parfaitement de ta gloire. Nous nous arrangeons comme nous pourrons jusqu'à ce que tu sois célèbre, c'est-à-dire dans quatre ou cinq ans. Ensuite, nous achèterons une maison à la campagne, pour que tu aies de l'air pur et des œufs frais.

En attendant, ils mangèrent mal et respirèrent peu, dans un étroit logement. Parfois, cependant, le matin, un peu de soleil traînait sur leur lit; ils élevaient des serins en cage et des fleurs en carafes et les murs étaient magnifiés par les portraits de Talma et de Rachel. Rien n'est plus charmant, d'ailleurs, qu'une misère que l'on devine provisoire; il n'y a pas de vilaine salle d'attente quand on se dispose à un voyage radieux. Or, Bousseuille disait trop bien les vers pour qu'on le laissât végéter. Il s'en gargarisait, les lançait, les rattrapait, jonglait avec eux, au point d'en laisser parfois tomber qu'il ne ramassait pas, dédaigneux et superbe. Tout lui était

bon. Il vous hurlait *la Cigale et la Fourmi* à en faire trembler les vitres, et le moindre monologue, passant par sa bouche, tonnait comme une tragédie antique. Ame simple, Michèle couvrait son grand homme, se ruinait pour lui en cache-nez et en gilets de laine. Et il ne pouvait abaisser son fier regard sur elle sans rencontrer ses yeux fidèles et admiratifs qui le remerciaient d'être si beau et d'avoir tant de génie.

En dehors de quelques vagues camarades sans cesse dispersés par des tournées, ils ne voyaient guère qu'un ami: M. Sébastien Zitsch, jadis comptable, et qui, ayant laissé pousser sa chevelure, en avait profité pour se mettre à la poésie. Lors de la fête annuelle des Economistes du neuvième arrondissement, Auguste avait récité un poème de Zitsch. Les Economistes, par leurs applaudissements frénétiques, avaient sacré ensemble l'interprète et le poète. Celui-ci, encouragé, s'était mis au travail et il en était résulté un drame mythologique en cinq actes et onze tableaux: *Icare*, que l'aviation rendait d'actualité.

Un soir, M. Zitsch posa les cinq cahiers sur la table où Bousseuille et sa femme achevaient leur maigre dîner.

— Voilà, signifia-t-il en caressant son œuvre d'une main voluptueuse. Le rôle principal — le tien, Bousseuille — comporte douze cent quatre-vingt-six vers; mais celui de Pasiphaé est extrêmement important, lui aussi. J'ai réfléchi: seule, notre Grande Tragédienne est de taille à l'affronter. Restons entre sommets. Il faut qu'elle le joue, tu entends, il le faut. Retiens bien ceci, Bousseuille: on ne peut lire vingt lignes d'*Icare* sans pleurer. Qu'elle les lise ou qu'on les lui lise, et l'affaire est dans le sac. Rien que

son entrée! Elle arrive; elle regarde la mer, lève un bras et s'écrie:

Par le ciel qui bénit et par l'enfer qui fauche,
Je regrette déjà mon ancienne débauche,
Et je hais, par ma foi, cette vertu nouvelle,
Car, pour Pasiphaé, l'honneur est d'être belle.

Enfin, je te confie le manuscrit, va; sois éloquent et ne reviens pas sans quelque chose de signé.

A partir de cette remise solennelle, toute une série de tribulations commença. Auguste, portant pieusement *Icare* sous son bras, fit une douzaine de fois le trajet du théâtre de la Grande Tragédienne à son domicile particulier. Il lui écrivit des lettres si fiévreuses, si lyriques et si inquiétantes qu'elles restèrent sans réponse. Zitsch s'impatientait.

—Tu n'es pas débrouillard, finit-il par déclarer; il faut que je m'en mêle.

Il s'en mêla, sans obtenir plus de résultats. Sous une pluie battante, *Icare* protégé par une toile cirée, il attendit devant le théâtre la Grande Tragédienne qui passa avec une rapidité de météore, sans qu'il osât l'arrêter. Assez découragé, le poète revint chez Bousseuille et exprima son intention d'envoyer bonnement le manuscrit par la poste.

—Ce serait de la folie! protesta Michèle. Frappons un grand coup. Cherchons quelque chose d'original.

—Mais quoi? interrogea Auguste.

—Je crois que j'ai trouvé, répondit Michèle, rougissante. Je vous préviens que c'est énorme, mais la fortune aide les audacieux. Cela m'est venu cette nuit; je ne dormais pas; je songeais au moyen d'arriver jusqu'à cette femme que l'on dit très bonne et j'ai conçu un plan que voici en deux mots: Auguste joue *l'Abbé Constantin* à Neuilly-Plaisance. Il n'a qu'à demander son costume. Habillé en prêtre, il ira la trouver; elle le recevra certainement, car elle s'intéresse aux bonnes œuvres. Une fois en face d'elle, il se démasquera, lui avouera la vérité et lui lira *Icare*. . . .

—C'est un peu fort, en effet, balbutia Auguste, mais je suis résolu à ne reculer devant rien.

Quant à Zitsch, il trouva l'idée admirable, et l'on convint de la mettre à exécution dès le surlendemain.

A deux heures, un prêtre—visage

grave et cheveux gris—sonnait à la porte de la Grande Tragédienne. Bousseuille était blême d'émotion. Il avait pu arriver sans autre incident qu'une courte discussion avec un jeune apache, lequel avait croassé sur son passage.

"Attends, je vais te botter le derrière, eh! sale lardon!" avait déclaré Auguste, au grand étonnement admiratif de son interlocuteur. Maintenant, introduit dans le hall, il vérifiait la stabilité de sa perruque et la vraisemblance de ses rides. *Icare* attendait sagement, caché par la soutane usée, le moment d'étaler au grand jour ses innombrables alexandrins.

—Madame demande à monsieur le curé de bien vouloir l'attendre une dizaine de minutes, fit le valet de chambre.

—C'est bien, mon enfant, répondit Auguste.

Et les mains sur les genoux, indulgent et attendri, il regarda autour de lui, heureux de ce luxe qui lui semblait déjà être un peu le sien. Mais mieux valait répéter la scène. Voyons: la Grande Tragédienne arriverait. "Monsieur le curé? . . ." Alors, d'un mouvement aisé, comme s'il se découvrait devant elle, il retirerait sa perruque. "Madame,—il y a une façon de dire madame aux reines,—madame, daignez excuser ce subterfuge. Je ne suis pas le digne ecclésiastique que vous pouvez croire: je suis un artiste qui vient vous apporter un chef-d'œuvre." Que se passerait-il ensuite? Elle rirait, ou bien elle se fâcherait un brin, pour la forme, puis il lirait et elle sangloterait, enthousiasmée à la fois par la pièce et par le lecteur.

Il en était à la signature immédiate d'un engagement de quatre mille francs par mois, quand le valet de chambre fit pénétrer dans le hall une dame voilée et parfumée qui esquissa devant Bousseuille une légère genuflexion. Il se demanda à qui ce témoignage de respect pouvait s'adresser, puis il y répondit par un vague sourire. L'inconnue s'assit, feuilleta un album, soupira, se leva, se rassit, se releva et, prenant une décision subite, se jeta aux genoux d'Auguste.

—Mon père! s'écria-t-elle, ce n'est pas ici l'endroit, je le sais, mais vous aurez pitié d'une pauvre âme qui souff-

fre. Je viens de comprendre que vous aviez été mis sur mon chemin à l'heure même ou j'avais tant besoin d'un guide moral et d'un appui! Je suis si malheureuse! ... Ne me repoussez pas. ...

Auguste esquissa un geste de recul. Mais déjà la dame s'était lancée dans une longue confession. Voilà: elle était artiste et mariée, et elle se préparait à suivre la Grande Tragédienne en Amérique avec son mari, qui jouait d'obscures utilités. Mais elle se trouvait à un détour de son existence: un homme, un homme pour lequel elle éprouvait un singulier penchant:—"Oh! ce n'est pas seulement le goût du luxe qui me ferait agir, non, j'aurais horreur de moi-même!"—entendait la retenir à Paris. Elle hésitait, prise entre d'honorables scrupules et un vif besoin de s'évader.

— ... Personne pour me conseiller,—j'entends pour me donner de bons conseils. ... C'est si dur! ... Jouer la comédie le soir et puis rentrer dans un foyer sans douceur, sans confort près d'un homme que la misère et la malchance ont amoindri! ... Et les détails vulgaires ... et toute la vie qui vous apparaît médiocre, serrée. ... Vous ne pouvez imaginer une chose pareille, mon père. ...

Mais Auguste l'imaginait fort bien, si bien qu'il prit sa tâche au sérieux, parla du mari comme il aurait parlé de lui-même et fut éloquent. Il devait bien lui rester quelque illusion au cœur, à ce mari; on garde toujours un peu d'illusion quand on appartient au théâtre. Et puis que faut-il pour sortir du malheur? Un rôle! Rencontrer un poète qui ait confiance en vous, qui vous fabrique une belle machine et qui vous impose. Rien de plus. On en a vu qui tentaient de se suicider à trente ans et qui, à quarante-cinq ans, entraient à la Comédie-Française! Des jeunes premiers qui crevaient de faim jusqu'à ce qu'il leur poussât un joli petit bedon de financier!

—Allez, mon enfant, conclut Bousseuille, écoutez-moi, partez en Amérique et espérez.

—Comme vous connaissez la vie! s'écria la petite dame, convaincue et ex-

tasiée, et la nôtre en particulier! Vous pouvez dire que vous m'avez retournée! Je vous remercie, mon père, en mon nom et en celui de Ferdinand.

Là-dessus, elle se leva, car elle était restée agenouillée, puis il y eut le bruissement d'un rideau de perles, et la Grande Tragédienne parut.

—Monsieur le curé, dit-elle, en s'adressant à Auguste, ayez la bonté de m'excuser de vous avoir fait attendre; veuillez vous asseoir et m'expliquer en quoi je puis vous être utile.

Allons! Le moment de la grande scène est arrivé. Il s'agit de retirer sa perruque, d'un geste large, et de commencer. "Madame, daignez excuser ce subterfuge. Je ne suis pas le digne ecclésiastique que vous pouvez croire. ..." Justement la Grande Tragédienne a l'air de bonne humeur; elle rayonne de toute la jeunesse de son sourire. ... Mais l'autre, l'autre qui reste là? ... Quand elle saura qu'elle a écouté la parole d'un camarade, d'un cabot, elle n'hésitera plus à abandonner le pauvre mari, qu'il devine semblable à lui, sensible et bourgeois. ... Il s'agit de deux existences à sauver. ... En un éclair de cette bonté que rend, parfois, la clairvoyance, Auguste pressent Zitsch poète sans poésie—comme lui-même est sans doute un petit comédien sans avenir. Alors il n'hésite plus.

—Voyons, monsieur le curé, dit la Grande Tragédienne, remettez-vous et dites-moi ce qui vous amène.

Bousseuille se dresse, solennel:

—Je voulais simplement vous féliciter, madame, s'écrie-t-il. J'assistais à la générale de *Brutus*. Vous m'avez épâté. Je veux dire que vous avez été admirable ... surtout à la grande scène du deux, quand vous sortez par le jardin en gueulant. Vous êtes si belle qu'on oublie que vous *boulez* le un et que vous jouez avec des "têtes à l'huile." Là-dessus, j'ai bien l'honneur de vous saluer. ...

Et laissant les deux femmes stupéfaites, il sort à pas lents, vénérable, lourd de tout le poids d'*l'care*, mais léger d'une bonne action.



SOME COLLOQUIALISMS FOR UP-TO-DATE ROMANCE

By C. C. Johnston

RATHER than become your wife, I would make the best of the husband I have!

A rapturous outburst from the pianola held him spielbound.
He recalled having met her on her first twenty-third birthday.
His parents were rich but respectable.
As she weighed his words the scales fell from her eyes.
A steely look came into the eyes of the young ironmaster.
She patted him on his hobbies.
Her arch smile bridged the way to an understanding.
She looked hatpins at him.
Her tears fell harmlessly on his cravenette.
And they lived happily even afterward.
They kissed hygienically.



"SHE has the earmarks of wealth."
"What are they?"
"Diamonds set in platinum."



"WHY not set your cap for that young fellow? He's single and well off."
"Yes, he's single—but he knows he's well off."



THE picture of health is never painted with that dollar-a-bottle stuff.

THE DRAMATIC DECAMERON

By George Jean Nathan

MR. NAT GOODWIN has been divorced again, the ticket speculators have experienced their regular annual abolishment, the Bijou Theater has changed managements once more according to its established custom, Mr. William Winter has ceased temporarily to deplore the commercialistic degradation of the drama at the rate of two cents a word, and Mr. Charles Frohman has threatened anew to produce a play by an American author. It is to be presumed, therefore, that another theatrical season has run its course.

If further guarantees are needed, we may discover them in the numerous ingenious references to camphor balls and "ringing down the curtain" in the theatrical weeklies, in Mr. William A. Brady's acute case of hoarseness and in Mr. Walter Hackett's usual disappointed look.

Viewed in critical retrospect, the season of 1910-1911 has been not only a case of "What a fall, my countrymen!" but what a winter and what a spring as well. It would not be stretching the point to assert that the theatrical year just past was worse than either "Welcome to Our City" or "Miss Patsy," which even an optimist *summa cum laude* would agree must have been pretty bad.

Out of a meager total of eighty-nine new dramatic productions, there were revealed only twenty-three of even approximate merit—and the "approximate" qualification must be underlined very heavily. The successes, save in comparatively few instances, were of the big-toad-in-the-small-puddle sort, and, in other and more propitious seasons,

might have achieved small if any distinction. Failures, semi-failures, "rather" successes and the like followed heels on heels, and in the trail left by one hundred and seven productions of all sorts, exclusive of the special performances of Gillette, Mantell, Bernhardt and Sothorn and Marlowe, the traces of decisive merit are relatively as difficult of discernment as is sense in either the pronunciamiento of a union labor leader or the American jury system.

To hazard, therefore, the setting down of the season's so-called All-America dramatic tables of worth promises to be a venture as inimical and dangerous to one's accepted mental status and critical sanity as seems to be an honest expression of a vigorous and perfectly proper doubt over the justification of the lofty dramatic position traditionally accorded Mrs. Fiske. It is to be borne in mind, consequently, that in submitting a personal estimate of the ten best plays of the season, I do so with a complete cognizance of the fact that two or three of the selections do not actually deserve a place in such a table—be the season what it may—and that their inclusion has resulted as a matter of necessity because of the general dearth of dramatic excellence.

In editing this list, I have confined myself to straight dramas—or plays, if you prefer the characterization—and have deferred frank melodrama (in its colloquially accepted sense), farce and the so-termed poetic or fanciful presentations for my supplementary tributes of orchids or chloroform. Encasing myself in a suit of mail, then, and having had a care to hide all can openers in sight, I make bold to flaunt before Nero's

very nose my estimate of the ten best straight dramas of the theatrical season of 1910-1911, ranged in the order of critical preference.

1. The Twelve-Pound Look (Barrie)
2. As A Man Thinks (Thomas)
3. The Concert (Bahr)
4. The Thunderbolt (Pinero)
5. The Havoc (Sheldon)
6. Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford (Cohan)
7. The Gamblers (Klein)
8. Smith (Maugham)
9. The Upstart (Barry)
10. Pomander Walk (Parker)

Inasmuch as the public is disposed usually to wish a reason for everything from Postum to post-mortems, it is to be guessed that I must give myself up to the court for the giving of testimony in regard to the latter. Already, in my mind's eye, even as I am compiling this dramatic table of the Emerged Tenth, I can see the soft cabbages coming swiftly in my direction, and in my mind's ear can distinguish the approaching beats of horse hoofs on the pavements as the infuriated mob comes nearer and nearer with its cries of "Lynch him!" I can hear the derisive shout: "Ha, ha! He's put 'The Upstart,' one of the worst failures of the year, in his list!" I can hear the scoffing yell: "Ho, ho! He's had the impudence to leave out 'The Country Boy' and put in 'The Havoc,' to discard 'Nobody's Widow' and insert 'Smith,' and to put a one-act play above a drama of four!" I can hear the titters, feel fingers raised to foreheads significantly—and still eat pie with my meals three times a day!

With this reassuring announcement, therefore, and with my corps of agile stenographers ready to respond to the ton of protestations that is destined soon to clog the post, permit me to rush in where more timid critical angels may fear to tread. I have bestowed the laurel wreath on Barrie's dramatic miniature as opposed to Augustus Thomas's worthy offering, despite the fact that it is only one-fourth as long as the latter, with the same equanimity with which I would place a Lincoln's Gettysburg address above the finest of a Robert G. Ingersoll's many fine orations, though the

latter be fifty times as long; with which I would rate the short story of a Guy de Maupassant over the most deserving of the deserving tomes of a George Sand; with which I would class the smaller "Simeon" or "Tobias" of a Rembrandt above the opulent canvases of a Sir Joshua Reynolds; with which I would elevate the quatrain of a Tennyson to a mighty place over the best of a Whittier's lavish outbursts, the possibly inconsequent (as you may perchance regard it) little song of a John Howard Payne or a Rouget de Lisle over the pompous measures of a John Sebastian Bach, or the single tiny note in the voice of a Tetrassini over the whole darned Mary Garden scale.

Brevity is the true motif of the soul song of genius. The man who can achieve much in little is the superior of him who can achieve much in much. In the artistic fist fight between quality in condensation and quality in elaboration, my pesos of appreciative admiration are ever laid on the former. If an artist can bring his message home to me in half an hour, whatever that message is just so long as it is a message worth while, I choose to regard him as more exalted than his brother who takes four or five times as long to do the job. I may be wrong, to be quite sure, but I do not believe I am stealing my wages from the boss by selling him this to me well founded sentiment. That the intrinsic meat and manner of the works under comparison may not be precisely the same cannot operate, for that reason, against the force of the general truth with any more serious impact than might result from the implication that the deeds of a Booker T. Washington and a David Starr Jordan are not to be compared because of a slight difference in the fundamental color of the parties concerned. The effect of results—the memory of it all—is what counts, always has counted and always will count in every case, every time, everywhere.

Who cares—indeed, *should* care—whether the arbiter has employed years or only days to gain the results if he achieves the results? "The Twelve-

Pound Look" is a superbly built drama, constant in its humor and satire and definite message; it is fresh, vital, new; and its few characters are drawn with the clearness and sparkle of spring water. It was and is the best play of the season. And if this be treason—good-bye forever!

The Augustus Thomas drama, rich in merit and withal an imposing exhibition of finished craftsmanship, takes second place among the presentations of the season. This effort has been extravagantly lauded by critics from far and near, but one fundamental phase of the work seems to have eluded the general eye. Divested of its entertaining and informative speeches and dialogue, and stripped of its temporarily exhilarating verbal application of mental strychnine, the bared foundation reveals itself to contain nothing more than the time-honored, obvious and fungi-covered story of a husband and wife at loggerheads and of their eventual reunion through a "sick little Dick." Of course the playwright deserves much credit for his ability to build an interesting and worth-while drama around a theme so trite as this, yet in the final estimate of worth everyone at the table must be known by his right name. All the perfumes of superficially enthralling Arabia cannot wipe away the fact of the tainted blood and bone out of which the drama is made.

Third place is given the Belasco production of the adapted Viennese comedy "The Concert" because in comparative freshness of theme, in uniformly graceful presentation and elucidation and in eleven o'clock tonic effect, the exhibition stood out in bold silhouette against the season's gray horizon. As analyzed drama, "The Concert" must probably stand aside and let "The Thunderbolt" pass up the stairs ahead of it, but despite the results of an operation in the critical clinic and a disclosure of the stronger intestines of the Pinero product, I am impelled to rate the presentations as I have. Both plays reveal a sensitive drawing of character and both are born with a very vivid objectivity, but an inherent sympathy oxygenizes

the Bahr work and forces it ahead of its rival.

"The Havoc," from a hitherto unknown pen, proved jolly satire on the serious triangular subject and afforded every indication that the head back of the pen had other things in it than hair roots. The play was amusing, well constructed save in one or two last act details, novel to the point of being curious and full of good brain food. One of the big financial successes, "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," turned out to be a humorous adaptation of the well known Chester fiction, consistently amusing, intensely "American," and pleasant pastime. "The Gamblers," while as good a work as Charles Klein has ever published under the proscenium, and while attention-holding from curtain to curtain, suffers in eventual rating because of its final impression of artificiality and unremitting theatricalism. "Smith," a not profoundly consequent affair, is nevertheless blessed with a nice sense of humor, with considerable drawing room finesse and with quite a titillating tale as an undercurrent, all brought out by very able acting. "The Upstart," one of the dire financial failures, contained more to recommend it to the intelligent portion of the theatergoing element than any of the plays that do not appear in our list—which is undoubtedly the reason why it failed. Replete in delicious fun of Shavian color, and smile teasing from beginning to end, the play richly deserves the place I have seen fit to give it. Its imitativeness of method alone prevents it from gaining a higher position.

"Pomander Walk" gets the tenth seat at the table because it is more entertaining than any of the other plays on the season's record. This must be taken to mean only what I wish it to mean. The Parker play is clean, pretty, pleasing and inspiring, but in another season another guest might be found in its place at the banquet board of the victors.

To turn to the farces, "Baby Mine" gets the seat of honor. To "The Cub," Thompson Buchanan's Hoytian view of the Kentucky feud country, is accorded

second place. "Over Night," "Excuse Me" and "I'll Be Hanged If I Do" finish nowhere in the final rating as compared with the two leaders. "The Deep Purple" was the best frank melodrama of the year. It had no contenders, for the melodramatic entries were few. Under the head of poetic and fanciful plays—a most disingenuous manner of characterization—and gauging the works only through their adaptability to the conditions of the theater, "The Piper" comes first with "The Scarecrow" following. "The Blue Bird," while possessing much to commend it in proscenium display, nevertheless looms up a disappointment at this hour of Gabriel's critical trumpet call. So, too, "Chantecler."

There are three things in the world about which tastes are rarely, if ever, coincident—girls, onion soup and musical comedies. Take a group of twenty men and no two will agree on any of these subjects. Every mother's son of them may link arms on every other topic under the heavens, from Mrs. Humphry Ward's novels to the case of the Senator from Illinois; but mention girls or onion soup or music shows to them and there will soon be hard work on hand for the bouncer. Through sheer force of personality, I have often been able successfully to get away with a deep affection for girl and onion soup at one and the same time—a rare feat—and the confidence borne of this somewhat irrelevant achievement infuses me with the necessary courage to name my ten musical comedy candidates for the leading honors of the season. Load your pistols, take aim at me—and read:

1. The Spring Maid
2. The Pink Lady
3. The Balkan Princess
4. Hans the Flute Player
5. The Girl and the Kaiser
6. Naughty Marietta
7. He Came From Milwaukee
8. Madame Troubadour
9. The Slim Princess
10. Madame Sherry

I shall not attempt to justify my selections and the order in which I have rated them, although the plays in point are of

this relative merit in my eyes and ears. Probably you may believe that "Madame Sherry," for instance, should be shot up the list in an express elevator. Probably you may assert that "Hans" should head the column. If this catalogue does not please you, you are at liberty to change it to suit your own respective tastes. I have done my duty as I see it, with my hand on my heart and with my order for another dish of onion soup already in the *garçon's* keeping.

Before proceeding to an investigation of the labors of the actors during the spent season, there lingers in our ears the call of the gallery for an immediate publication of the year's dramatic "booby" list. In this order, then, let us submit our notion of the worst offerings:

1. Welcome to Our City
2. Miss Patsy
3. The Other Fellow
4. Drifting
5. The Confession
6. The Zebra
7. Our World
8. The Penalty
9. The Marriage of a Star
10. Two Women

An arduous toil it is, indeed, to sift out ten of the worst plays of the season! There was such an infinitude. But of all the bad lot, I choose to offer the above tidbits as grim warnings. The manner in which the critics managed to recover from the effects of these ten presentations is to be divulged shortly in a new edition of "Ten Nights in a Bar-room."

In going over the records of histrionic attainments with a view toward proclaiming the ten actors whose work before the American public during the past year entitles them to special recognition, it seems more discreet and profitable to leave out of our present consideration the work of the steady "stars" and players of equally persistent electric sign and three-sheet prominence. The efforts of such actors are too well known and vary in grade and possibly equivocal fundamental merit too little from year to year to render a cataloguing of their

relative worth at this late hour anything short of riot inciting. A "star," in many cases, is as largely a matter of individual taste as Strauss's music, Port Salut cheese, pink shirts or professional baseball. That I may care for Miss Billie Burke, for example, quite as little as I do for the other four forms of alleged diversion does not indicate that there may not still remain a definite place for each of them in the world's critical scheme of things. But so largely does the question of taste enter into the matter that he who would select Puccini above Strauss, Rocquefort above Port Salut, fine black stripes above pink, duck-on-rock above the Cub and Giant gentlemen, or Miss Violet Hemming, let us say, above Miss Burke—however sincere and correct his choice might be—would yet lay himself open to charges of rank critical astigmatism, myopia and mayhem on the part of persons who entertained an irrevocable preference for Harry Von Tilzer, Limburger, lavender negligees, the Red Sox and Katherine Kidder.

I have my own ideas as to the relative and comparative status of our "stars" and featured fortunes, but in this day of promiscuous dynamiting I deem it inexpedient to maintain anything but deep silence in the matter. I will go only so far as to say that, among the male "stars" who have come before us this last season, Mr. John Mason, in my humble estimation, deserves greatest praise for his progressive work revealed in the drama by Augustus Thomas, just as I freely accord Miss Edith Wynne Matthison an elevated ranking above all her leading sisters of the stage for her demonstrations during the same period. Of the most highly improved unstarred actors of the season whose advanced characterizations, to this mind, are deserving of exceptional praise, I submit this rating:

1. Leo Ditrichstein in "The Concert"
2. Frank Reicher in "The Scarecrow"
3. Jameson Lee Finney in "The Deep Purple"
4. M. Tellengen in "Camille"
5. John Flood in "As A Man Thinks"

6. Sidney Melven in "The Lights o' London"
7. Robert McWade in "The Country Boy"
8. Lennox Pawle in "Pomander Walk"
9. Hazzard Short in "Smith"
10. Charles Dalton in "The Twelve-Pound Look"

Have you ceased shaking with mirth? No? Well then, let us see what we can do for you! Mr. Ditrichstein, the Tully Marshal of the theatrical year of 1910-1911, has been given the seat at the head of the table because, in a mode of acting hitherto foreign to him, he has managed by the exercise of a very real and unsuspected artistry to create of himself over night a star without quotation marks. He has jumped the English Channel that tosses and rolls between low farce and high comedy with one mighty leap, has won the fair tributes of critics and housebroken audiences and has invested a by no means intrinsically six-cylinder role with light, shade, personality, equipoise and ultimate projectile lovableness. Mr. Reicher's impersonation of the scarecrow come to life in the Percy Mackaye play was genuinely intelligent and proportionately artistic, and left little to be desired in the rendition of a very difficult role. To bracket these first two actors, indeed, would be unfair to neither. Mr. Finney's portrayal of the badger worker in the Armstrong-Mizner gun play was admittedly a sleek duplication in look, manner and tone of a member of the locked-door-smashing pirate crew, and went far toward establishing the success of what, without the able interpretation it received, might have been a much less convincing melodrama.

Young Monsieur Tellengen's Armand in the Bernhardt production of the cough lady classic was a finished and sincere piece of work, marred only by an intermittent, peculiar pedal maneuver that managed to distract attention sporadically from an otherwise pleasant delineation of a rubbishy role. Mr. Flood's work in the last act of the Thomas drama alone assures him a goodly position at our table. As Clayton, this actor gives the best performance of that portion of his career within our critical jurisdiction.

The little Melven boy of eleven, playing a half-frozen, half-starved guttersnipe in the ridiculously bad Sims melodrama—a kid whose dad is in the lock-up for bestowing a black eye on mother and whose mother is in jail for stealing money with which to liberate the "old man"—gave a performance that made the efforts of an "all-star" cast including Thomas Wise, Holbrook Blinn, Charles Richman and William Courtenay, all usually potent players, seem amateurish in comparison. This youngster, with hunted eye, chattering teeth and stooped shoulders quivering in the night wind, and with a voice whineless and unstudied yet shot naturally with a world of fatality and tears, single-handed brought a scoffing house to silence and from silence to sobs. Not since little John Tansey's memorable performance in "This Woman and This Man" has so fine an instance of child acting been seen on our stage. Mr. McWade's handling of the part of an old newspaper man in the Selwyn play; Mr. Pawle's Dickens-like Brooke-Hoskyn in the Parker idyl; Mr. Short's splendid "tame cat" in the Maugham exhibit, and Mr. Dalton's really excellent portrayal of the vain, pompous Englishman whose god is gold and fame seem, to my way of looking at it, to bring to these gentlemen the relative estimate that has been made of them and their labors. And, I believe, deservedly!

We come now to the ladies, "God bless 'em"—as the toastmaster who has beaten his wife only an hour ago always says. Employing the same standards of judgment as were operative above, and restricting ourselves wholly to the "unstarred," we throw shame and caution to the winds and hang this list out on the fire escape where all the neighbors may see it:

1. Emma Dunn in "Mother"
2. Laurette Taylor in "Seven Sisters" and "Lola"
3. Jane Cowl in "The Upstart" and "The Gamblers"
4. Olive Wyndham in "The Thunderbolt," "Nobody's Daughter" and "Vanity Fair"

5. Janet Beecher in "The Concert"
6. Marguerite Clark in "Baby Mine"
7. Willette Kershaw in "The Country Boy"
8. Edith Taliaferro in "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm"
9. Ada Dwyer in "The Deep Purple"
10. May Blaney in "Chantecler"

Out of a role organically as obvious as rouge on the Avenue at high noon, Miss Dunn deftly built a characterization so compellingly unforced, natural and sympathetic that, for the difficult achievement, I lean out of my box and present her with the chief histrionic prize of the season. Her "mother" was your mother and my mother rather than Jules Eckert Goodman's, the author of the play. In an encompassing swamp of sobbiness, the role was made to cling to the heart of the audiences in spite of itself by the exercise of a sheer finesse and a prudent, entirely effective modulation. If there was any doubt in my mind that Miss Dunn did not deserve my complete approbation, let me assure you that it was dispelled by a subsequent view of the contrasting effort of another actress in the same role. Miss Laurette Taylor, who, in the matter of general efficiency, is the best unstarred actress on our New York stage, and in praise of whose labors this writer has constantly urged his pen since that day in years back when he first and accidentally caught sight of her finished work in a cheap, obscure "road" melodrama company, richly deserves second honors. Unaided, this lady lifted two poor proscenium specimens out of the Slough of Despond and, through a manifestation of a very distinctive and uncommon talent, succeeded in keeping the irritated audience and thirsty critics in their seats.

Miss Cowl, a recently revealed artiste of unmistakable worth and possessed of an ingratiating weapon in the shape of a curious, thoroughly cogent repression, came into immediate favor through her handling of two entirely different roles. Her interpretation of a somewhat metallic part in the Klein drama was accomplished with nice conviction. The card at the fourth place at our table bears the name of Miss Wyndham, a member of

the late New Theater company who first came into metropolitan prominence through her nightly toil in a popular native product known as "The Man From Home." Her Amelia Sedley in "Vanity Fair" was acknowledged by the critics to be the one ray of histrionic light in the grayish fog; her Helen was etched into the Pinero drama with just the right amount of light and shade; and her management of a comparatively unimportant bit in "Nobody's Daughter" lodged against the New Theater producers the repeated charge of having made their conventional error in importing a player for the leading role when they had one at their elbows who was amply capable for the job.

Miss Beecher's Helen Arany, in the comedy detailing the escapades of the artistic temperament, not only indicated spacious improvement over her previous praiseworthy theatrical exertions but also divulged an attractive capability in the young actress for a new phase of work. Miss Clark's naively conceived picture of the young wife in the Margaret Mayo farce achieved importance through its invested sense of caution and projected sense of daintiness. Through the conception of this player, a hard and unyielding role was cultivated to a point where it actually nursed a morally equivocal, though admirably written, farce to high success. Miss Kershaw's chorus girl in the bucolic-metropolitan drama was a diamond among its kind, a really beautiful instance of applied observation and a gentle insinuation of the eternal efficacy of brains when employed in the work of the stage. In a part of greater importance, a performance of this caliber would merit even more extravagant praise than I feel permitted to bestow upon it here. Miss Taliaferro's vivification of an intrinsically mushy Kate Douglass Wiggin heroine was accomplished with such satisfactory results that it won the unanimous bravos of the critic clan. While the written role was arduous chiefly for its unremitting "sweetness," the actress's success in eliminating much of the cloying sugar makes her deserving of reward. I can think of one other player who might

have equalled Miss Taliaferro in her task, but I can think of none who could have excelled her. Miss Dwyer's results with an unimportant role in the crook melodramatic hit of the year gained for her a place at the table, and Miss Blaney's Hen Pheasant in the Rostand barnyard drama brings her to our banquet board. Were this table being set by other critical hands, it is to be presumed that Miss Blaney's place would be moved nearer the head. After due deliberation and three cigars, however, it appears to me that the importance of her achievement is, in final analysis, something less than would appear. To this mind, Miss Blaney's performance received the elaborately copious critical garlands mainly because of Miss Adams's not entirely satisfactory interpretation of the role of the rooster, which raised her delineation several pegs by way of contrast. Nevertheless, the work of this actress was of sufficient merit to secure for her an invitation to the feast of the good and faithful servants.

After pausing momentarily to permit my breathless horses to moisten their feverish tongues in the cool wayside pool and to regain their wind, I crack the whip and off we go, lickety-splickey, to discover the best features in the season's productions. The most beautiful instance of scenic painting was disclosed in the first act of "The Arrow Maker," and showed a gigantic canyon in the south of California, with its towering walls of reddish rock and timber-choked trail stumbling down into the depths, all paling into the blue of night at the dying of the day. The best bit of "business" was shown in "The Old New Yorker," when, in the offices of Beekman, Corliss & Company, old-fashioned Beekman slowly and laboriously dictated his extensive and ultra-polite trade letters to his equally old-fashioned secretary while young Corliss, the contrasting junior partner, rattled off his brief and uncompromising correspondence at a mile-a-minute rate to his twentieth century stenographer. The most beautiful speech occurred in "The Twelve-Pound Look," was delivered by Miss Ethel Barrymore in the role of the wife who left her hus-

band because she was no longer able to live in the same house with insolent and persistent Success and Wealth, and related a woman's hopes, fears and speculations over the future of the youngsters who were now breathing the stifling atmosphere that she had found impossible to tolerate. What a wonder the little man Barrie is in this dangerously delicate avenue of sentiment! My one annual smiling tear has fallen regularly at the command of his pen. There is a greater good, a finer inspiration, a grander heartache in Barrie's "kid speeches" in "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire," "Peter Pan" and "The Twelve-Pound Look" than may be felt in the magnificent twilight silence of St. Paul's, in the whispering music of a hidden violin or in the epic poetry of the open sea. One line of Barrie makes the whole world kin—and ken. And it is a confirmed bachelor who is writing this endorsement!

The most amusing situation was uncovered in the third act of "Baby Mine," where the young husband, after having been made to believe that he has been blessed with twins, is suddenly confronted with still another baby and is impressed with the amazing fact that he is the father of triplets, when, as a matter of stork record, not one of the tots has been delivered at his door. The most intensely dramatic moment of the season occurred in the second act of "The Boss," and showed Regan, erstwhile dominant politician and ring-leader, beaten and at bay, with the mob attacking his home, yet fighting and flouting and challenging still. The best "curtain" or act climax, I credit to "The Concert." It comes in the first act. Arany, the hot-blooded pianist, has gone away on another of his "concert" tours. His wife is apprised of the fact and, in company with the husband of the young woman who is destined to act as Arany's "accompanist" in the rendition of this particular ditty, puts on her wraps to make after her errant spouse. "Come, Mrs. Arany," says

Dallas impatiently. "We had better hurry!" Mrs. Arany smiles. Then easily: "Oh, no; Gabor always takes his time in such matters!" Indelicate? Yes, maybe, but gorgeous just the same! If this act climax has demonstrated itself to be the most effective of the year, I must say so. The twenty thousand persons who have witnessed the play will agree with me, I believe, if they will only condescend to deny themselves for once the natural impulse to be hypocritical.

The two prettiest melodies in the season's musical plays were "Wonderful World," sung by Miss Louise Gunning in "The Balkan Princess," and "Beautiful Lady" (very much like the former), sung by Miss Hazel Dawn in "The Pink Lady." The best individual musical comedy dancing of the year is credited to Miss Bessie McCoy in "The Echo." The most attractive chorus maneuver was the dance of the hat boxes in the Winter Garden entertainment. And the most beautiful newcomer on the metropolitan stage during the season, if this be within a critic's province, and in all faith we do not see any reason why it should not be, was an unidentified chorus girl in the Lieblers' production of "Marriage à la Carte."

Even as these valedictory words are being set down, the managers are gathered outside my door waiting impatiently to be ushered into my retreat. My page whispers in my ear that their arms are groaning under the prodigious piles of prospecti for the coming season. And two of them, according to Rinaldo, the faithful Zambesian giant who guards my portal against the intrusion of bill collectors, old college chums, girls and other nuisances, have loaded pistols on their persons. I shall see them in their turn, however, and if I do not meet my death as the penalty for having indulged myself regularly in the critical habit of calling a Valeska Suratt a spade, I shall repeat to you next month what they tell me of the drama that is on its way to our stage.



NOVELS FOR HOT AFTERNOONS

By H. L. Mencken

ENYVY of Johann Strauss & Sons was one of the curses of Richard Wagner's life. Whenever the strains of a passionate Strauss waltz, bursting from some Tribschen or Bayreuth beer garden, impinged upon his ears he would straightway forget the contrapuntal problem before him and begin to pat juba. And simultaneously there would fall upon him a great melancholy, for he was firmly convinced that he could not write waltzes as the Strausses wrote them. When it came to stupendous music dramas, the Odysseys and Iliads of music, he was entirely at home, and even at the enormously difficult art of wedding march writing he showed a pretty talent and was well aware of it, but whenever his thoughts turned to waltzes he threw up his hands. So he envied the tribe of waltz kings, whose very hearts beat in three-quarter time, and being an honest man, he made no attempt to conceal it.

The joke lies in the fact that Wagner was wrong. His belief that he could not write waltzes was a mere superstition, a fixed delusion, a *folie*. Had he ever actually tackled the job he would have produced, I am convinced, a score of waltzes as good as "Wiener Blut" or "Künstler Leben," and perhaps a masterpiece or two comparable to "Wein, Weib und Gesang" and "Rosen aus den Suden." For the great artist is always a sort of nest or telescope of lesser artists. Shakespeare the first rate poet enclosed Shakespeare the second rate poet, and somewhere within that second rate poet, covered by a dozen other shells, was Shakespeare the Bankside hack. So we have today not only the peerless and flawless poetry of the sonnets and of certain

parts of "Othello" and "As You Like It," but also the excellent bad poetry of "Cymbeline" and "King Lear" and the No. 1, hardwood, custom made flubdub of "Romeo and Juliet." Observe, again, Schiller and Goldsmith. Here were two poets of a high order—and also two accomplished manufacturers of Fleet Street trade goods. To get a bad job done well, indeed, the best way to proceed is to hire a first rate man, for even his worst is always better than a fourth rate man's best. The most beautiful frescoping ever slapped upon a wall was put there by James McNeill Whistler, a great artist. The best newspaper reporter that ever lived was George W. Steevens—whose training was that of a Macaulay or a Walter Pater. The best comic songs on record were written by a man who also composed a symphony for the Leipzig Gewandhaus and helped to edit the Schubert manuscripts and was a master of the fugue. The best crayon portraits extant are Raphael's. What a superb super Forbes-Robertson would make!

These lofty thoughts are suggested by a reading of the late David Graham Phillips's posthumous novel, "THE GRAIN OF DUST" (*Appleton*)—frankly a best seller, but still a best seller which makes all other best sellers pale. Phillips, I believe, was almost a man of genius, and easily the most skillful American novelist of a decade, but within him there also dwelt a fashioner of loud, preposterous fictions for the department stores, and in "THE GRAIN OF DUST" it is this sub-Phillips that has the floor. The tale, in its essentials, is a sort of burlesque of its species. The passion of love, which in the average best

seller is of say 10,000 horse power, is here shown to be of fully 10,000,000 horse power. The hero, who, by the rules, should just miss a height of seven feet, is here revealed, in A. B. Wenzell's amusing caricatures, as a man of eight feet three. And the heroine, who should be beautiful enough to send the hero down for a count of seven or eight, here knocks him out so completely that he remains in a state of coma for nearly a year. Altogether, it's a noble best seller, with enough automobiling and money spending in it to stimulate the most jaded; but it is also something more, for Phillips, as I have said, was a thoroughly accomplished workman, and even when he put on his greasy overalls, spat upon his hands and tackled a dirty job, he could not help doing it with an air. Now and then, in "THE GRAIN OF DUST," you will come upon a passage of acute and illuminating observation; ten times oftener you will come upon passages of vivid and dramatic dialogue. From end to end you will note the absence of "as though," "he don't" and all the other familiar stigmata of the Indiana school. If you dislike best sellers you will find this one at least bearable on a lazy afternoon. And if you like them you will find it charming.

Another empty but diverting tale is "PANTHER'S CUB," by Agnes and Egerton Castle (*Doubleday-Page*), in which the principal characters are an opera singer of the paranoiac sort, her ex-husband, her daughter, her manager and young Lord Desmond Brooke. Fulvia de la Marmora is the name of the opera singer, and her daughter is known as Fifi Lovinski. Fulvia, waxing fat and forty-odd, is smitten by Lord Desmond's bovine beauty and proceeds to woo him with her roulades, but Desmond, having eyes, prefers Fifi. Not that his intentions are honorable—far from it! It is not, indeed, until he and Fifi arrive at Biddicombe's Marine Hotel at Dover bound for the Continent upon a morganatic honeymoon, that his conscience suddenly turns upon him and urges him to send for a clergyman. Thus Fifi becomes Lady Desmond Brooke, and her good mamma, Mme. Fulvia de la Mar-

mora, goes to her corner groggy. A somewhat commonplace story—but the Baron Jean de Robecq, *né* Hirsch, impressario and man of the world, saves it. The Castles should devote a whole volume to the Baron. His childhood in the Vienna Judengasse, his transition to New York and fortune, his acquirement of a Belgian pedigree, his curious adventures in matrimony, his dealings with Leopold the Unspeakable—all these events, set forth at length, would keep the sleepest reader awake.

"A FAIR HOUSE," by Hugh de Sélin-court (*Lane*), is a study of that most pathetic and helpless of men, the young widower with a child. John Camden, however, braves it out. He is resolved to be a real father to little Bridget—to give to her upbringing the best that is in him. Unluckily enough, he apparently gets his actual parental technique from the *Ladies' Home Journal*, for he undertakes to save poor Bridget from ignorance and prudery in the manner advised by Mr. Bok, and one of the consequences is that she throws herself into the arms of a married and sinful man, thirty years her senior. This ancient, however, stops to think it over, and thinking it over he concludes that it will never, never do. "What can you be to me?" he demands. "My wife? I'm married. My mistress? Seduction's an ugly word. My literary adviser? Thank you. No, it must end. I've made a fool of myself. Scores of women have flung themselves at me. I've kept clear of girls till now." So he sends Bridget home—and soon afterward she is engaged to a nice young fellow named Tommy. An odd story.

E. Phillips Oppenheim is still hard at it. Before I can get to the end of one of his books another comes down the chute. The latest is "THE MOVING FINGER" (*Little-Brown*), a sort of Arabian Nights fable of a poor young fellow, Bertran Saton by name, who is staked and given his chance in the world by the eccentric Henry Prestgate Rochester, Esq., J. P., M. P. Just what happens to Bertrand afterward I am not going to tell you. In the first place it would spoil the fun you are sure to get out of reading the story,

and in the second place I don't know, for I haven't read it myself. Upon "A SOLDIER OF VALLEY FORGE," by the late R. N. Stephens and G. E. Theodore Roberts (*Page*), my report must be equally vague. It seems to be a Revolutionary romance, with plenty of fighting in it. "THE PATH OF GLORY," by Paul L. Haworth (*Little-Brown*), goes back even further—to the French and Indian War and the great doings of General Wolfe. The occasional appearance of such volumes shows that the historical romance, for all the dismal chanting of dirges over its bier, yet has a spark or two of life in it. At any moment it may sit up, blink its eyes and emit the loud whoop of recrudescence.

"QUEED," by Henry Sydnor Harrison (*Houghton-Mifflin*), is a very frank and also a very excellent imitation of William J. Locke—more excellent, indeed, as an imitation than as a work of art. The outlandish Queed, with his stupendous learning and his amazing *naïveté*, suggests Septimus and Simon at every turn. Like both of those fantastic fellows, he is a complete stranger in his world, and even when the passion of love mellows and humanizes him and he is dragged into camp by the fair Miss Charlotte Lee Weyland, the dragging seems to be an act of daring exogamy. Mr. Harrison errs more than once on the side of extravagance: Queed becomes a mere marionette, without a toe on the ground. But that the story as a whole is well managed; that, at its worst, it is still immensely amusing; that, for a first novel, it touches a very high mark; that it would be difficult to imagine a more entertaining book for a July afternoon—all of this I admit freely, and even maintain vociferously. A new novelist who begins business by imitating Locke deserves three cheers and a tiger. The great majority of his fellows turn instead to Ouida and Archibald Clavering Gunter.

The merit of "THE MARRIED MISS WORTH," by Louise Closser Hale (*Harpers*), lies in the fact that its pictures of a player's life "on the road" are alive with the little touches that make for reality. The cheap hotel, the dingy

dressing room, the sooty day coach, the dismal station waiting room—the drawing of these scenes is photographic. The reader misses nothing—not even the smells. And yet, for all that Zolaesque honesty, the romance of vagabondage is not overlooked: it remains comprehensible, at the end, that actors should revile their day's work and yet love it. Specifically, the story deals with the perils which beset a stage couple whose work calls them different ways. Hilda Worth, married to Tom Lane, gladly sacrifices her own fortunes to his, but when the time comes for Tom to pay her back in kind, he essays to do it, not in good gold, but with a vague sort of promissory note. So they drift apart, and Hilda, going her lonely way, is ripe for the philandering J. Fleming Horner's enchantments. But Tom is too big a man to let her go. He has risked the happiness of both, but he has won. Success crowds upon him as actor and as dramatist, and Hilda, woman-like, finds more joy in it than if it were her own. "I have found my happiness," she says . . . "but on the other side of the footlights. I've dropped my mask forever." An acute, and no doubt accurate study of the elements which make for marital unhappiness among stage folk. The artistic defect of the story is in the fact that neither Hilda nor Lane is quite typical. Not many actor-husbands ever see their ships come in, and not many actress-wives are ever invited to arm-chairs on quarter decks. But for all that, you will like "THE MARRIED MISS WORTH." It has humor in it and sharp observation, and every one of its personages, great and small, stands out round and alive.

The automobile novel, a new and garish form of fiction, now engages our best seller manufacturers. It was the Williamsons, those industrious Sassenachs, who invented and perfected it. No subsequent maker has added any considerable improvements to their standard model, with its chauffeur who turns out to be a prince in disguise, its refined and brilliant conversation and its general air of what the French call "hig leef." The aim of the automobile novel is plainly

set forth upon the cover of a recent one, "FIVE GALLONS OF GASOLINE," by Morris B. Wells (*Dodd-Mead*), as follows: "This is a book to have at hand when the chauffeur (*sic*) or someone else is lying on the road under one's own machine engaged in tinkering; or when one's machine is temporarily at the repair shop, at so many dollars per day. This is a book that will take the edge off such misfortunes." A laudable purpose, certainly, but one belonging to psychiatry rather than to literature. However, the present tale seems well designed to meet and fulfill it. No less than 348 pages are laden with the stuff that passes for humor in *Puck* and *Judge*, and then, three pages from the end, it is discovered that plain Harvey Biggs is really the Hon. Edward Biggs-Biggsworth, son and heir to the Earl of Brockhurst. A publisher's note says that "FIVE GALLONS OF GASOLINE" was written "by the author whose name appears on the title page in collaboration with a well known writer, who, for reasons connected with the publication of another work entirely his own, did not wish to have his name appear in the present volume." My first guess is Henry James. My second is William Dean Howells. My third is Edmond Ros-
tand.

In "STANTON WINS," by Eleanor M. Ingram (*Bobbs-Merrill*), there is an interesting attempt to adapt one of the standard early Victorian plots to the new automobile novel. The one here used is that which concerns the girl brought up as a boy. Ralph Stanton, a daredevil of the tracks, employs young Jes Floyd as his mechanic, and then, after many adventures in many races, discovers that Jes is really a gal, and a very pretty one at that. Miss Ingram's experiment is interesting and will doubtless inspire imitation, for many excellent early Victorian plots, such as that of the lost will, that of the changeling and that of the repentant seducer might be automobilized without difficulty; but I am inclined to believe that the standard Williamson plot fits the automobile novel better than any of the old-timers. The difference is that between a new

suit of clothes and a suit of hand-me-downs. The one, given a good tailor, clings to every parabola and hyperbola of the figure; the other is sure to bulge where it should hug and hug where it should bulge.

Meanwhile, the Williamsons themselves, having given their great invention to the world, show signs of abandoning it, for in their latest novel, "THE GOLDEN SILENCE" (*Doubleday-Page*), though the hero is a brother to Lord Northmorland and there is an automobile, the former's right name is exposed on Page 4 and the latter is of no importance whatever. The scenes are laid in Algiers and in the desert beyond, and the story has a fantastic Bagdad flavor. But much better than the story itself are the numerous word pictures of the Saharan landscape, with its shifting lights, its endless emptiness and its impenetrable mystery. The Williamsons have still to prove that they are artists, but it may be freely granted that they are very competent artisans.

The remaining novels, if they are to be mentioned at all, must be mentioned very briefly. "THE HIGH HAND," by Jacques Futrelle (*Bobbs-Merrill*), tells the breezy story of Jim Warren's adventures in politics. Jim masters the game and turns its tricks against the gang, which is led by Old Man Tillinghast. Naturally enough, the Old Man's daughter, Edna by name, falls in love with Jim, and so the Old Man, doubly beset, throws up his hands and Jim is elected governor. "THE HAUNTED PAJAMAS," by Francis Perry Elliott (*Bobbs-Merrill*), is a merry farce which appeared originally in *The SMART SET* and so I need not describe it. "THE STAIRWAY ON THE WALL," by Augusta Prescott (*Harriman*), seems to be a detective story. I don't quite know; I have been unable to read it. "PEOPLE OF POPHAM," by Mary C. E. Wemyss (*Houghton-Mifflin*), is better stuff—an impressionistic sketch of English village life, with plenty of wit in it and shrewd observation, not to mention a saving touch of sentiment. "THE LAND CLAIMERS," by John Fleming Wilson (*Little-Brown*), is a tale of chicanery and high

endeavor in the Oregon timber country—a first novel of considerable promise. "A BOOK OF DEAR DEAD WOMEN," by Edna W. Underwood (*Little-Brown*), is a collection of nine short stories in the Poe manner, some of which will make you shiver and some of which will make you snicker. "THE CONSUL," by Richard Harding Davis (*Scribner*), is a single short story bound in pretty blue boards. Like everything else that Mr. Davis offers it is very workmanlike, very affecting and very improbable. And "OLD RELIABLE," by Harris Dickson (*Bobbs-Merrill*), is a mellow character study of the Southern darkey—not the soaring, money grubbing, platitudinizing Afro-American of Tuskegeean fable, but the lazy, thieving, lying, filthy, good-humored, good-for-nothing "coon" of reality.

Of books designed to penetrate and inflame the mind, as opposed to books designed merely to caress and stupefy it, the dear publishers send me all too few. Bad novels, licentiously bound, arrive by the score, expressage prepaid, but works of devotion and information I must commonly beg, borrow, buy or steal. Here, however, are half a dozen fished up from the torrent of fiction—one telling all that is worth knowing about coal mining, another telling all that is worth knowing about pianos and piano music, a third upon Socialism, a fourth upon Italy, a fifth lambasting the suffragettes, a sixth advocating universal peace.

"A YEAR IN A COAL MINE" (*Houghton-Mifflin*), is by Joseph Husband, a young Harvardian who went from Cambridge to the Illinois bituminous belt to learn the secrets of practical mining. Fortune filled his first year with heroic adventures. He saw explosions and a cave-in; he helped to fight a stupendous mine fire; he went down into the gas-filled depths in an oxygen helmet to drag out the dead and dying. All these things he describes simply and clearly in a slim, black volume. There is no apparent striving for dramatic effect, but the drama is there all the same.

Henry Edward Krehbiel, author of "THE PIANOFORTE AND ITS MUSIC"

(*Scribner*), is more profound but scarcely less interesting. Mr. Krehbiel believes that the pianoforte was invented independently by three men—the Italian Cristofori, the Frenchman Marius and the German Schröter. To establish this theory he goes into a consideration of the instrument's predecessors, the clavichord and harpsichord; and then, having established it, he proceeds to the piano's development and to the corresponding development of piano music. At the end comes a chapter on the great virtuosi of the past. Mr. Krehbiel, as always, is full of apposite and entertaining anecdotes, queer odds and ends of learning, penetrating opinions. Every amateur pianist will get pleasure and profit out of his book.

"THE IDEAL ITALIAN TOUR," by Henry James Forman (*Houghton-Mifflin*), is a compromise between guide-book and traveler's tale. Mr. Forman carries the reader from Naples to Pompeii, to Capri, to Rome, to Florence, to Pisa, to Venice, to the Lakes, dropping illuminating remarks about hotels, trains and the things worth seeing, but he is never the schoolmaster or the statistician. His book is bound prettily in red leather; there are twenty-four excellent pictures, and a brief bibliography helps the prospective pilgrim to further inquiries. The three remaining tomes I cannot recommend. "THE LADIES' BATTLE," by Molly Elliot Seawell (*Macmillan*), is an uninspired presentation of the familiar arguments against equal suffrage; "UNIVERSAL PEACE," by Arthur E. Stilwell (*Bankers Pub. Co.*), is a tedious and amateurish tract against war, and "THE COMMON SENSE OF SOCIALISM," by John Spargo (*Kerr*), is an elementary explanation of the Marxian gospel.

It is useless, of course, to argue that Cale Young Rice is no poet, for an impressive seminary of pundits, led by William Dean Howells and James Lane Allen, maintains the contrary with great eloquence; but all the same, I make bold to lay it down that, poet or no poet, Mr. Rice has certainly put precious little poetry into his new book, "THE IMMORTAL LURE" (*Doubleday-Page*). Here

we have four one-act plays in the heroic manner, three in English blank verse, usually decasyllabic, and the fourth in a choppy abbreviated measure which seems to have been suggested by the Japanese *tanka* and *haikai*. The trouble with Mr. Rice, as I have suggested in the past, is that he lacks an acute sense of rhythm. His lines show no suavity, no music; too often they halt, stumble, blunder, stagger, back and fill.

Let it not be assumed that I am pleading here for mere prettiness. Metres were made for poets and not poets for metres. Shakespeare, when the spirit (or spirits) moved him, harnessed iambi to trochees and clubbed them into wild gallops—but what wrists were on that daring charioteer! They felt every tremor of the plunging steeds; they had strength to keep the chariot on the track; so long as they held the reins the thunder of the hoofbeats never lost its barbaric, pulse stirring rhythm. But Mr. Rice, alas, is no Shakespeare. His horses run away with him, trip one another, go sprawling into the ditch. And so far as I have been able to discover, there is not enough beauty in the thought he has to utter to make one forget the clumsiness of his way of uttering it.

Horace Traubel fills the three hundred and more pages of his "OPTIMOS" (*Huebsch*) with dishwatery imitations of Walt Whitman, around whom Horace, in Walt's Camden days, revolved as an humble satellite. All of the faults of the master appear in the disciple. There is the same maudlin affection for the hewer of wood and drawer of water, the same frenzy for repeating banal ideas *ad nauseam*, the same inability to distinguish between a poem and a stump speech. Old Walt, for all his absurdities, was yet a poet at heart. Whenever he ceased, even for a brief moment, to emit his ethical and sociological rubbish, a strange beauty crept into his lines and his own deep emotion glorified them. But not so with Horace. His strophes have little more poetry in them than so many college yells, and the philosophy they voice is almost as bad as the English in which they are written.

The New Thought and the theory of a moral order of the world are here mingled with "It don't need to be" and "Why shouldn't I be stuck on myself?" Away with such stuff!

And now for sonnets. Here are 222 of them in four slim volumes—96 by Alanson Tucker Schumann, 26 by Jeanie Oliver Smith, 58 by Ferdinand Earle and 42 by John Myers O'Hara. Of these extremely ardent and copious sonneteers, Mr. O'Hara pleases me best—and by far. His "PAGAN SONNETS" (*Smith-Sale*) are brilliant in coloring, sonorous, earnest and truly lyrical. In particular that one called "The Hushed Gods" is a glowing and beautiful thing. Mr. Earle, it appears, is rather more the sonnetsmith than the sonneteer. His little book (*Kennerley*) has a preface in which the technical exigencies of sonnet making are discussed, and in the collection following there are several examples of a new sonnet form, the rhymes running thus: *a, b, b, b; a, a, a, b; c, d, d, c, c, d*. The experiment is interesting, but Mr. Earle is not the man to carry such anarchies to success, for his lines have little music in them and his flights of fancy do not take him far above the commonplace. Mr. Schumann and Miss Smith are sonneteers of even slenderer talent. The former fills a good part of his book, "THE MAN AND THE ROSE" (*Badger*) with ballads and rondels of considerable grace and fluency, but his sonnets are fourth rate. Those of Miss Smith belong frankly to the Poet's Corner.

A paragraph for Mr. Badger's troupe of lesser bards. At their head stands Helen Gray Cone, whose "SOLDIERS OF THE LIGHT" contains at least one sonnet ("The Common Street") of great merit, and a number of spirited ballads. Good verse is also to be found in the "AEGEAN ECHOES" of Helen Coale Crew and in the "ORPHEUS" of Willis Hall Vittum and the "POEMS," of Herbert Muller Hopkins. Mr. Hopkins lately died, and so his volume was put together by his widow. The work was worth doing, for the author, in the midst of much tawdry stuff, wrote more than one song with true music in it.

SHOPPING FOR THE SMART SET

By Marion C. Taylor

THE SMART SET SHOPPING DEPARTMENT will be glad to offer suggestions or answer questions regarding shopping and the New York shops. Readers of the SMART SET inquiring for names of shops where articles described are purchasable should enclose a stamp for reply, and state page and month. Address: "EDITOR, SMART SET SHOPPING DEPARTMENT."

THE warm weather is here at last and I venture to say will receive a more cordial reception than is usual. It did seem as if spring would never come, and society became impatient to wear its thin clothes and disport itself in the sunshine. The sudden spurt that the thermometer made toward the middle of May gave fresh impetus to the dressmakers and milliners, who were the most despondent of all over the late season; the warm spell revived their courage and seemed to give them a host of new ideas.

One of the most fashionable Avenue shops gave a midseason opening last week that was really of greater importance to my mind than the original one given a couple of months ago. Paris, as everyone knows, has a cruel habit of holding its good things back till our buyers have returned home and then gradually displaying these creations to its own exclusive trade. Of course the best establishments in town are not bothered by this little practice, as they keep a resident buyer there the year round, who sends them everything of interest. But, nevertheless, it is at this season, just before the close of spring, that some of the very smartest things are exhibited and the real novelties appear.

The shop I mentioned is one of the most beautiful establishments in the city, a pioneer in location, being quite far uptown, in a spacious, well arranged

building, where the very newest importations are shown to the best possible advantage. New gowns, wraps and hats are constantly pouring in, and one could write pages of enthusiastic descriptions about them, but unfortunately my space is limited, and as there are many other things I want to tell you about, I will try to note just the new points and the tendency of the mode, leaving the rest to your imagination.

The styles of the French Revolution are most prominent—broad stripes, long, tight sleeves to the wrist with tiny frills over the hand, high choker collars or soft fichus, the results referred to as "*la citoyenne*" model.

Again I notice quite a few very large jeweled buckles—sometimes round, sometimes long and narrow—but always quite prominently placed right straight in front, in the middle of the waistline, which is slightly raised. These appear on foulards, soft silks, chiffons, anything at all.

I see fewer foulards than ever, and these the tiny, old-fashioned patterns I described in March. Instead, I see many soft-shaded, two-toned taffetas, more striped surahs than anything else, and a few chiffon-covered satins.

One of the newest effects, that is at last going to be a this season's success after its introduction abroad over a year ago, is the fashion of making up white lingerie frocks of the richest description over black satin, usually showing a vel-

vet hem. These frocks are made of a combination of handsome laces and Italian embroidery or some such work. Filet lace is most popular, but one sees many fine laces used, too. Mme. Paquin sent over to this opening the simplest and finest of white lingerie frocks imaginable, all fine Valenciennes and the most delicate handwork, made over a flesh pink charmeuse or cashmere de soie with a striking empire green ribbon sash which was interlaced through the high-waisted belt of lace and hung in a flat sash effect in back. Speaking of green, there is a new color as brilliant as empire but bluer in tone, that one sees used a great deal on white frocks. So far it has not been named but it is most effective. This is not a white season. One sees almost no all-white frocks—they are treated in some way with a color and many of them have black velvet hems of various widths, a practical as well as smart idea.

Frocks for Midsummer

The results of a search to find some well made, well fitting and smart frocks, of good material, at reasonable prices, have more than justified the trouble, and have really been a great encouragement. For in an atmosphere of constantly rising values, where the high cost of living is the most popular theme, and when the saleswoman in any Avenue shop tells you, "Only \$235—such a bargain!" and shows you about three yards of material with a dab or two of lace and expects you to enthuse, it does your heart good (not to mention your bank account) to find some things really worth your money, and I think every one of these frocks is that.

To begin with, a fine white voile (that wrinkle-proof joy of the woman with a limited income) is made up with a profusion of fine tucks, the waist having kimono sleeves and the skirt showing some wide tucks from the knee down. Around the square neck, running down each side of the neck and also forming the belt and cuffs is a two-and-one-half-inch band of fine baby Irish lace of a splendid quality. This dress sells for \$14.50—with particular emphasis on "sells."

For \$14.50 a marquissette has a little delicate-colored eyelet embroidery on the waist, a colored belt and border at the bottom and trimming of two widths of baby Irish lace on the waist. Another at the same price has more elaborate-colored embroidery and wide Cluny insertion that is quite effective. A white lawn dress is just as cool and unassuming as it can be with its delicate tucks and its wide Irish insertion at the neck. Its price of \$9.75 is something to keep one's courage up.

In colored and white linens all of the following are made of good quality materials and are very smart; the values speak for themselves. At \$18.50 two models, the first of a French linen, has points, button-trimmed, which come up to the bust and in the center back of the waist, and has collar and cuffs of a self-toned satin striped with black and white, very effective. It buttons in the front, as do all these linens, the only way to have a handy frock made. The second one is a very simple but none the less effective model, buttoning down the side, its sole trimming consisting of collars and cuffs of Irish lace. At \$14.50 are two others equally good. The first is smart in dark linen and has large pointed revers of white piqué piped with a contrasting color. A chemisette is to be worn with it. The second one buttons down the side, and is trimmed with three oblong braid-embroidered tabs at the buttonholes on the waist and four on the skirt. It has a striking small collar and large cuffs of black and white stripe which give a smart touch.

At \$25.00 I saw a fine white voile dress, handsomely embroidered in the ultra-fashionable woolen embroidery in many-toned soft Bulgarian colors, that individualized it and made it quite a little out of the ordinary.

A model that is becoming justly popular shows a simple plain skirt of a colored linen, with a simulated tunic and a Russian blouse effect waist of white crêpe beautifully hand-embroidered and inset with Irish lace, showing touches of the linen of the skirt. One shop in town is showing this model at a figure that is decidedly reasonable.

Separate Coats

There is a veritable craze for separate coats this season, intended to be worn over all sorts of frocks from silks to lingers and coming in satins and taffetas. They are all short, the longest reaching to the hips, and most of them are quite fancy. I do not at all admire the satin ones. In the first place, I cannot disabuse myself of the idea that a separate coat of this sort is middle class—I haven't forgotten the covert coats of ten years ago and I hope never to see another similar fashion. Secondly, I do not think the satin coats look well unless accompanying a similar frock, which is, of course, the old three-piece idea and not at all what the shops intend. I hear them talked about on all sides, and even the best Avenue shops tell me they are selling them, but I haven't seen a single one on a smart woman, and I don't expect to. On the other hand, the separate taffeta coats intended to accompany lingerie frocks, and in this case being shown in the most beautiful shades, corals, greens and the like, with long coattails and trimmed with ruchings and soft old time puffings, are most fascinating and bound to be liked. When they accompany veiling or chiffon frocks, they repeat some tone used on the frock and just fit in with the present quaint modes.

An Avenue shop, noted for its reasonable prices and smart styles, is showing one of these coats in many beautiful tones of the softest possible taffeta. It is a tiny short affair with a large cabochon of the taffeta in front and long coattails in back. To accompany lingerie frocks one of these coats is almost a necessary accessory this year, and if you can have but one, choose a soft rose or a dull blue tone which will blend with a number of hats, frocks and so on. This shop I mention only asks a little more than half what the other Avenue establishments want.

Summer Wraps

Chiffon holds undisputed sway for summer evening wraps. To be sure one sees a little of everything—satins, taffetas and

crêpes; but nothing is smarter for general use, when one hasn't a fortune than chiffon. Two of the most effective wraps were shown me last week in an establishment noted for its costumes. One, of an orange-toned chiffon, had a border hemstitched on a lemon yellow chiffon. Does it sound dreadful? It was beautifully blended, a case where just the right tones had to be chosen or the results would have been fatal. It was simply made with fairly loose straight sleeves. A soft yellow chiffon rose trimmed each side of the front, and where the yellow band ran down into a "V" at the neck in back hung a dull silver tassel, a beautiful finish. This was also shown in other equally unusual and effective colors. The second wrap was just as simple as it could be, hence its charm. Of black chiffon cut in the regular kimono fashion, it was bordered along its entire edge with a three-inch band of black velvet edged on both sides with a close row of large rhinestones, the same black velvet band which was so popular for theater wear this winter. At the back of the neck the bands coming up from either side crossed, forming an X, the top being the necessary V to insure a proper fit around the neck and the bottom points each finished with long crystal tassels.

Linen Suits

About the most popular of the new ideas in linen suits are those of open work linen crash, a new fabric which shows a border, sometimes two, of square openwork similar to drawn work in effect. This is used just above the hem in the skirt and generally forms shawl collar and cuffs on the coat. The suits are quite expensive but undeniably good-looking. Dresses of the same fabric show a square collar of Venise lace and a black satin bow as a finish.

One of the most reliable fabrics, that is as dependable as blue serge, is linen crash in the natural shade. A shop in town is showing a suit made of a very even weave linen crash without the white flecks that some of it shows, very coarse and having splendid wearing

qualities. Both the coat and skirt are very plain but exceptionally well cut. The coat is lined with a good quality of light weight satin which naturally gives it a much better tailored look than is possible with the unlined linen coats. The suit sells for \$29.50 and I consider it one of the best values I have seen.

Belts

At this season of the year any novelties in belts are most welcome, and while there is no startling change in them, there are several besides those I described last month that are most attractive. I find them of all widths, from two inches to three or even four, in the latter case usually of a crushable leather or other fabric; the effect should not be over three inches. One of the prettiest for wear with white skirts is a white patent leather with narrow colored vertical stripes and a simple gilt buckle. A pigskin one, three inches wide, has a long narrow buckle of the leather. But my choice for general summer wear would be the $2\frac{1}{4}$ -inch wide soft calf belts which have a covered buckle of the same and come in all colors, white and the natural calf, lined with silk. In beltings, to accompany the smart gold or silver plain buckles or those with open monograms which are still good style, I notice very few startling novelties. Stripes and block checks continue to be among the favorite patterns and come in a great variety of beautiful colorings. Moiré in plain colors holds its own and occasionally is varied by a fancy woven border in the same color. Vertical stripes are more popular than horizontal ones—I presume because they have a tendency to make the waist appear smaller.

Hats For Country Wear

One of the smartest houses in town for sailors, Panamas and the like tells me that the correct sailor has a crown three inches in height and the same width brim. It is a good sailor because it comes with extra large head sizes, and fitting far down on the head is apt to be becoming. An Avenue shop has a dis-

tinct innovation: one may choose a shape there untrimmed—at decidedly reasonable figures, too—and have it trimmed in this shop or not as one chooses. A most complete line of French and domestic shapes is carried by them besides a wonderfully beautiful assortment of trimmings. I saw there beautiful Panamas in some lovely new shapes at very reasonable prices. These also showed the necessary large head sizes, which for some unknown reason have always been rather hard to find.

A novelty that has caught on among the smart young crowd in town is the hats made of white Turkish toweling, with even the fringe used flat in crossbar effects as a border. They really are quite attractive and are generally simple shapes, rolling sailors and the like.

Proper Corseting

The present fashions make stiff corseting an absolute impossibility. Everything tends toward suppleness, and I think it is hardly necessary to dwell on the importance of this point, for most women today realize that without a proper foundation little can be accomplished toward successful gowning.

The very best idea I have seen recently is really not a corset at all but a form supporter, made of a strong yet cool porous material and fastening without any lacing. In fact, it conforms to the natural lines of the figure as much as possible—correcting them where necessary.

There is one arrangement which obviates the necessity for supporters. The ideal height comes just enough above the waist line to hold the gown in place but may be fitted with a brassiere when necessary. For motoring such a garment is almost a necessity, and in fact I know of nothing more satisfactory for any purpose.

Bath Salts

It is only in comparatively recent years that Americans have learned the value and delightful qualities of bath salts, and even now many people look

upon them as an extravagant luxury. Sometimes the point of view is really funny. Long trips are taken to foreign or American spas where a very expensive course of baths are given, when oftentimes the use of good medicinal bath salts would go a long way toward relieving the trouble. Most imported bath salts are quite expensive, and the complaint is made that there is a certain unpleasant dryness to the skin after their use, but there has recently been placed on the market a bath salts made on this side of the ocean which has been so successful that in a few short months its vogue has become quite remarkable.

The main point in its favor, to my mind, is that it has sufficient oil in its makeup so that one escapes the usual unpleasant dryness after a bath.

Most men prefer a still stronger crystal, which is not delicately scented like the one above referred to but is instead redolent of the spruces and pines of the mountains, and even a small quantity used in a bath has a most invigorating effect. The more delicate salts sell for one dollar per twenty-four-ounce jar, and the latter, two dollars per tin containing seven muslin bags of salts each, the proper proportion for a strong bath.

Good Soap

Many particular people of refined taste will not use a perfumed soap but demand an absolutely pure cleansing soap that has a soothing, healing effect upon the skin. A soap that has stood the test of years of use has recently been put up in a small convenient size called the "Guest Size" as it suggests itself immediately for use in the guest room where a larger cake is unattractive as well as wasteful. It is the ideal size for traveling, and has a still more valuable asset: it lathers well in either hard or soft water—and how many times one finds water that refuses to act properly with the ordinary soaps! It comes either in single cakes, which cost but ten cents in the guest size (and there is no reason why a good soap without perfume should cost more) or in boxes of a

dozen. The large size for general use is only twenty-five cents.

A Delightful Cold Cream

About six months ago, while in one of the most reliable shops in town, I was discussing the merits of various cold creams with the buyer of their department, who, being a chemist, has been directly responsible for many fine toilet articles that have been placed on the market by the firm in question. He told me that he had been working for the past half-year on a cold cream but he could give me no idea when I might expect to try the result, as it was still far from pleasing him. It seemed to me that if as much time and trouble as that were to be expended on it, good results might be expected. A short time ago I dropped in to discuss other matters with him and found that he at last had succeeded in producing a cream that satisfied him. I have tried it and I find it the most desirable cold cream I have ever used. It is not a greaseless cream but a food for the flesh, and although it is splendid for any use it is intended especially to be rubbed in the face before retiring and to feed the tissues. The way it is put up is quite a stroke of genius; in very attractive gold-decorated white porcelain jars not unlike egg cups in shape, it's an ornament instead of a disfigurement to one's dressing table. The tops of these jars, unlike any other tops I have seen, screw on, and besides lessening the chance of breakage, they avoid having any metal come in contact with the cream. The cream itself is not cheap, and the jar makes the whole a toilet preparation for particular people who want the best.

Hot Weather Helps

Sunburn, that most painful malady which is bound to visit those of us who enjoy the open air and sunshine in the summer, is often amenable to soothing remedies, and among the best of these is a lotion recently brought to my attention, which also has the added value of preventing freckles and healing the most irritated skin. A bottle should be

put in everyone's trunk before leaving town if one expects to enjoy the usual summer pastimes. A very soft and pleasantly perfumed talcum powder sells for the extremely reasonable price of twenty-five cents per pound package.

For the Motorist

Many new things have been shown me lately that are splendid suggestions not only for the motorist but for the person contemplating a trip abroad. First a motor or steamer hat of collapsible straw that is smart as well as practical, not an easy combination to find. It fits far down on the head, and is prettiest in white with a bright-colored velvet cockade at one side and a veil to match. The veils are a new model, having several good points. They are of the usual length, but have in the center running along one edge an elastic band which holds them around the neck, either worn over or thrown back from the face, and obviating the necessity for pins. The hat sells for only \$10.00 and the veil in the best quality chiffon for \$4.00. Another new veil having much to recommend it is made of washable, dust-proof veiling that is very practical.

A new coat which, besides being especially smart, is also inexpensive, comes from England. It is made of rosebury cloth in white, or colors if one wishes, but the former is much smarter for summer, and is light and cool, shower-proof, cleans and even washes, and is made with either plain or raglan sleeves on the general lines of a duster, with large patch pockets which are good-looking as well as useful. It costs only \$15.00.

A splendid case has just been put on the market by one of the leading silversmiths that has many points in its favor. Of flexible seal it fastens by clamps and contains ivory toilet articles, including a manicure set. These articles are so cleverly arranged that the case when closed is less than 2½ inches thick. When open it furnishes a violet cover for the dressing table while traveling and shows one's toilet accessories displayed in proper order.

A splendid folding hat case of walrus leather has many possibilities. About the size of a suit case, its ends collapse and the bottom folds up. Thus the case may be hung flatly against the rod in a car or slipped into almost any available space. When opened up tiny rods hold the sides in place, the bottom drops down, is clamped in place, and a receptacle is offered that is dust-proof and has convenient pockets and rubber straps to hold things in place.

Inexpensive Wedding Gifts

Acceptable wedding gifts are always in demand, so I shall group together some splendid values in inexpensive gifts that have recently been shown me. For instance, from \$5.00 to \$25.00, beginning at the first price, there are silver standard three-minute glasses for long distance telephones or egg boiling; sugar and cream sets in Lenox pottery with silver deposit; Lenox ware vases, which come with silver deposit in very beautiful designs; cheese dishes for Camembert or any round cheese, of rock crystal in a silver stand, the crystal coming out and leaving a silver comport. A new and very useful receptacle of silver has a shell-like pattern—the shell part for butter and the upper part containing salt and pepper shakers, a small sauce bottle and two glass receptacles sunken in for relish. Flower holders for motors are only a little more expensive, and two delicate vases exactly like the familiar ones Rebecca carried at the well are very reasonable and very pretty for a single flower. Enamel toilet boxes are one of the smartest gifts and come from \$15.00 up. At the same price are rock crystal and silver shields for chafing dishes. A fern dish of crystal and silver, with a tube in the middle through which the water can be poured to reach the roots of the plants, was only \$22.00, and a splendid double bowl, the under one for cracked ice, would have many uses. Parasols are another suggestion; new imported ones have unbreakable crystal handles and tips that are quite pretty. Others a little more expensive are of white satin with black velvet stripes.

Bags to match these are also shown. A black velvet bag handsomely beaded with platinum beads was only \$22.00.

From \$25.00 to \$50.00 I saw a dozen covered ramekin dishes set in silver, which are very useful as the dishes may be put in the oven; and a fruit dish with a rack for grapes and the grape scissors, the rack unscrewing and leaving a sandwich tray. A jelly dish of rock crystal, the center round dish sinking into a second dish with a wide rim, both of which might be used separately, was another novelty. At a little over \$50.00—\$62.00 to be exact—I saw a five-piece tea set of Lenox pottery almost entirely covered with etched silver—in fact, the cream-toned pottery only showed in two of the pieces. If one could not afford a silver tea service, this was undoubtedly a solution, for it was of course very reasonable and to my mind every bit as beautiful. Many of these sets come under \$50.00, of silver deposit and the pottery which comes in the familiar "Brown Betty" dark blue black and such exquisite shades as deep turquoise blue. They also come in the *tête-à-tête* sets, at much more reasonable prices.

Willow Furniture

The steady growth in the popularity of willow furniture, not only for summer use, but in many cases for all-around use in moderate homes, is due to several existing conditions in the furniture world. Among others two of the principal reasons are the cheap and poorly made wooden furniture with which the shops are flooded, which drives discriminating people to buy something which is reliable though inexpensive; and secondly the growing beauty of the designs of the willow furniture, which attract people of taste. There is a small shop here in town that has a special appeal due to the complete line of artistic willow furniture, from tiny baskets to beds, desks, etc., sold at much more reasonable prices than prevail in most establishments. The assortment of designs is partly due, I discovered, to the wholesale business done by the establishment, for they make their own furniture and supply

many of the best known decorators in town.

The furniture is uniform in style and may be stained in any color to harmonize with the interior decorations. A full line of cretonnes and chintzes is kept and the results are the essence of good taste. They also make a specialty of designing furniture to order, and in this way one may be assured of individual things at little additional cost.

For Men

It seems that men take an interest in fashions, too—according to the inquiries I have received when describing men's apparel; so I have decided to devote a page or so of space each month to the smart things shown around town, not forgetting the welcome bargains that occasionally appear on the horizon.

Straws

Not relating to hats but to information gleamed from a reliable source, one of the smartest haberdashers in town, showing which way the wind blows.

First, a unique coat for general country wear and admirable for riding is on the Norfolk lines, has two plain plaits extending to the waist line in front, four buttons and patch pockets. It has the usual Norfolk belt, of course. The back is gathered into, or in reality held by, small plaits showing both above and below the belt. At each side of the back are vents which give it sufficient spring for riding. It is the smartest thing possible for country use. The best-looking evening coat shown in this same establishment, which is ideal for cool evenings in or out of town and suggests itself for many other purposes as it is admirably light in weight and of such a desirable shade, is practically a Chesterfield in style, reaching to a bit above the knee, fitted quite a little, with strapped seams, patch pockets with laps and sometimes showing stitching on collar and cuffs. The material is a dark gray covert cloth which is once more bidding for favor.

Shirts

One of the very best materials for shirts is what the haberdashers call "tafeta"—in reality, a very soft, light weight woolen material; and coming in soft shades, as it does, with turn-back cuffs, it makes one of the best summer shirts on the market. It is only recently that it has been possible to get it in a ready made shirt, but one of the best men's shops in town is now offering it at a reasonable figure in colors and white.

Blazers

For the last three or four seasons there has been a steadily increasing interest shown in the old time striped flannel blazer familiar two or three decades ago. Its revival intact is quite unusual, as most articles of wearing apparel change considerably in detail at each reappearance. College crews and smart polo and tennis adherents have been wearing the blazer for the last few seasons, but its use so far is not general; and its possibilities are vast, as any odd coat with convenient pockets has a hundred uses in the country, and coming as it does in almost endless variety of color combinations, from a conservative blue and white stripe to the most vivid university and club colors, it suits all tastes. Smart women have already adopted it for sailing and occasional wear in the country, and usually follow the colors of their husband's racing stable, their fiancé's college or something of the sort. Failing this, black and white is one of the best selections.

For Collars That Chafe

Do your perfectly good collars ever come home from the laundry with rough edges which are a sore trial to the disposition? A recent German invention is a tiny cake of white waxy-looking material which has an indentation in the center, and if it is run along the rough edge will smooth it instantly and does not discolor the linen. Many women keep it on hand especially for their maids who suffer so often from rough collars. It costs but ten cents and is really invaluable.

A Saving of Space

A clothes cabinet aptly called a "Town and Country Cabinet" should find a warm welcome in a house or apartment with insufficient closet space, and are there not many such houses and apartments? This cabinet is really unique; it is about five feet high and two feet deep, and is put together with dowels so that each piece comes apart easily, and it all fits in a box about the size of one containing a croquet set. It may be made of a variety of woods to match the furnishings of the room, but most attractive to my mind are those of white enamel with a skeleton frame covered with cretonne to match one's draperies. The inside is furnished with the same patent system of hangers which are now installed in the up-to-date trunks, and enable one to hang three gowns if necessary on each hanger and when they are in place to swing the entire assortment in view. The compactness of this cabinet when "knocked down" and the small space it occupies when put together, besides its attractiveness, seem to make it fill a long felt want.

This Month's Records

At this season most people are interested in popular music, and with this in mind the makers of records have issued several very catchy selections. From "The Pink Lady" we have the popular waltz, "My Beautiful Lady," "By the Saskatchewan" and a splendid medley containing both of these and two other favorites. A medley from "The Balkan Princess" includes the gems from that tuneful little opera, and the very popular "Let Me Stay in Dixie Land" from "The Slim Princess" is given as a duet. For opera lovers a remarkably good and remarkably cheap record of the ever popular "Sextette" from "Lucia" is just out. Alma Gluck, the very charming newcomer to the Metropolitan, sings "My Laddie," the Trubetskoy-Thayer Scotch air, and "Tu," a Habanera of Spanish-American extraction, in a delightfully fresh voice that is most appealing.

SOMETHING PERSONAL BY THE PUBLISHER

ABOVE the workbench of a little shoe shop in upper New York is a sign: "There is no fun without work."

A philosophic cobbler that, but from my point of view his aphorism needs re-writing. To my mind it should read: "There is no work without fun." I suppose the sociologists could pick flaws in my version, but a maxim, like a poem, must be permitted a certain license.

Assuredly, hard work went into the making of the June SMART SET, but we took pleasure in the work, and every day brings fresh proof that our readers are enjoying the result. First of all, we have quieted the fears of those who fancied we meant to make radical changes in the magazine they have come to love. Typical of this needless disquiet was the following confession:

This is an anonymous letter, and I never dreamed I would write one, but the reason I don't sign my name is because you don't know me; then, too, I am a "Well Wisher." I obeyed your instructions on the cover of the May number and read page 175, and I think when I see the June number the last thread that binds me to my girlhood will be broken. I was a schoolgirl in a young lady's finishing school when THE SMART SET first came out. Several of us bought copies, and we did think it was fine; and since that first copy I have *never* failed one single month to buy one. I graduated, married, left home and have traveled and lost all track of girlhood friends. I have, of course, had my share, or part at least, of unhappiness, lost loved ones and ideals, but somehow each month when I would see the old familiar blue and red cover with its "silly couple," I would have just a second of a warm glow around my heart and a tender memory or two. Then quick for my twenty-five cents and home for an hour's "Rosemary." Mr. Thayer,

I don't look forward to the June number a bit, but I am truly,

A WELL WISHER.

By now this writer—whom I would have given a direct answer had she signed her name—has probably duplicated the experience of an Ohio subscriber who writes:

When my mail came this morning I hurriedly looked to see the cover of my SMART SET. It was just like meeting a beloved friend with a costume slightly altered.

That, we think, puts the matter in a nutshell. The dress, not the friend, is altered, and though those light-hearted young people on our cover may from time to time change their costume with changing fashions, the familiar gray and scarlet background will continue to greet you. In the days when magazines were few the cover pages were never changed. By and by the *Ladies' Home Journal* began to vary its design at Christmas and Easter, and presently every month. Then *Munsey's* and other publications adopted the innovation and the fashion was fairly afoot. The insane lengths to which it has run are only too apparent. The newsstands affront the eye. A change is needed, and I predict that other magazines will presently adopt an easily indented cover with the same color, whether the issue be May or December. I prophesy this with the same confidence I felt years ago when I began to preach that patent medicines and objectionable advertising should be excluded from the newspapers and magazines. The change will come gradually

at first. One or two leaders will take it up; then the others will follow with a rush. And think of the relief to tired eyes when the gray of *THE SMART SET*, the brown of the *Atlantic Monthly* and the olive tint of the *Century* will not be the only quiet notes of color on your library table.

But enough of cover designs. There are many who can echo the North Carolinian who wrote us that he found the contents of the June issue so enjoyable that he had little thought for our much discussed new clothes. "The June number of your magazine," he says, "had much the same effect upon me as a cool, clean ocean breeze on a sultry day."

And yet this self-same "breeze" which the gentleman from North Carolina found so refreshing seems to have become a sirocco by the time it reached Texas.

MR. JOHN ADAMS THAYER:

In giving us a new magazine, for God's sake, give us something new! Your table of literary contents for June promises it; but what do I see? The same old names, the same old games. Can a leopard change his spots, a writer his style? None of us who has read (Two stars) but what knows the trend of his mind, the outcome of his story. The same may be said of others of your proposed contributors of romance; and as for (Two more stars)—you ought to know that the old mountebank is a has-been from away back.

Why, Mr. Thayer, should we buy your magazine, rather than any other of the David-Graham-Phillips-Robert-W.-Chambers kind? For the pleasure of looking at your pretty new cover? I tell you, Mr. Thayer, we sated readers want the new voice crying in the wilderness. And we don't want life touched up with the rouge box and powder puff in all our fiction.

A CALIFORNIAN ABROAD.

Did the author of that pungent note read more than the table of contents, I wonder? Surely Emma Wolf's "The Father of Her Children," Phillippa Lyman's "Repression" and Frederic Taber Cooper's "Somnambula" betray no hint of the rouge box and the powder puff. We do not blink the facts of human existence; we do not force hobble

skirts upon our authors. We put no leash upon a story save that of decency and good taste.

But why carry coals to Newcastle? The reader who discriminates knows the real quality of *THE SMART SET*. And our contemporaries know it. The other day a writer connected with a standard magazine of huge circulation said to me: "Do you want me to tell you why I think *THE SMART SET* is not a good advertising medium? When a tired man picks up the average magazine he is confronted by a brain-fagging assortment of articles on business, muckraking and uplifting which drive him to the advertisements for relief. With *THE SMART SET* it's the other way about. Wherever he dips into it he finds something to take him out of himself. But—and here is my point—it is *too* interesting. He forgets to turn to the advertisements."

Rather similar was the point of view of the reader who wrote me: "*THE SMART SET* is quite perfect as it is; please don't do what you did with those other magazines—fill it up with advertisements." Let me reassure all such. Quality, not quantity is our hobby. The advertisements that we accept must measure up to a high standard and most assuredly they will be read.

And now a final word about the distribution of this magazine, whose welfare we all have at heart. If you are a constant reader, though not a subscriber, why not ask your newsdealer to deliver *THE SMART SET* regularly just as he does your daily papers? Why hunt from newsstand to newsstand for your favorite magazine when its date of publication chances to slip your mind? The greeting, "Sold Out," will never annoy you if you take time by the forelock in the manner I suggest. Put this idea in your newsdealer's head. It will prove a convenience to both of you. Tell him to send you *THE SMART SET* monthly.

John Adams Thayer